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Jewish Ceremonial Institutions and Customs

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Seder Plate

Jewish Ceremonial Institutions and Customs

By

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PREFACE

The lectures, on which the matter contained in this volume is based, were originally delivered before the Oriental Seminary of the Johns Hopkins University in the winter of 1901. Their abstracts printed in the Jewish and secular press prompted many persons to ask for the loan of the manuscript. When told that the loan could not be made, the suggestion was offered that the lectures be issued for circulation. Hence, the author determined to cast the lectures into popular form. The third and revised edition is published on account of the undiminished demand for this book. The accompanying plates are based on the objects of the Sonneborn collection of Jewish ceremonial objects, at the Johns Hopkins University.

W. R.

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CHAPTER I

The Synagogue and its Utensils

The Jewish ceremonial institutions to be treated in the course of these chapters are such as are still in vogue among the great majority of Jews. The fact, that not all Jews observe them, is due to a marked tendency in the Synagogue to de-rabbinize Judaism, by laying less emphasis on the forms and more on the spirit of the faith. There is, however, not a single Jewish congregation, be the congregation ever so radical in its opposition to ritualism, in which all ceremonial institutions have been abrogated. The conviction is well nigh universal, that, while some institutions are absolutely meaningless for modern Jews, others are closely interwoven with the history and life of Judaism, because expressive of certain distinct teachings, aims and ideals.

All Jewish ceremonial institutions do not

have the same origin. Many are comparatively recent establishments; some are the creations of Talmudic times; and a few date back as far as the early days of the second Jewish commonwealth (circa 500 B. C. E.).

Taken in their entirety Jewish ceremonial institutions may be grouped under two large divisions:

(1) Those obtaining in the synagogue.

(2) Those obtaining in the home.

In taking up the first class, a word or two should be said about the name, purpose, and origin of the synagogue. The term synagogue is the Greek συναγωγή, an assembly (from συνάγειν "to bring together"). Its Hebrew equivalent is בית הכנסת and its Aramaic equivalent בית כנישתא "house of assembly."

Among Jews the synagogue is generally called בית הכנסת "house of assembly," although the names בית תפלה "house of prayer," בית אלהים "house of God," בית יהוה "house of the Lord," מקדש "sanctuary," and בית המקדש "house of holiness," titles by which the Temple at Jerusalem was originally known, are also ap-

plied to it. The term "synagogue," by which is meant the Jewish house of worship, was coined about the middle of the third century B. C. E. in Alexandria, where the Jews first came in contact with Grecian culture and adopted Greek as their daily speech.

The purpose of the synagogue was always threefold: devotional, educational, and communal. While the Jew is not only not forbidden, but enjoined to indulge in private devotions at his home and at times also at the homes of others, he is always expected to give proof of his identification with the congregation by attendance at set public services. The synagogue is considered the means for the preservation of the Jewish religion. "Do not separate thyself from the congregation"[1] is made the authority for this duty. On week days public services are conducted twice daily in the synagogue—in the morning a little after sunrise, and in the evening shortly before sunset. On the Sabbath and on every holiday,

[1] Aboth II, 5.

services are conducted on the eve of the day, the morning, the afternoon and the evening.

Every synagogue is also a school. There the young are taught the branches necessary for an active participation in the public devotion and for the proper understanding of the literature and history of Israel. In many a synagogue we find classes also for adults meeting daily for the purpose of studying the Old Testament, the Mishnah, the Talmud, the Midrashim, and later Rabbinical works. This fact accounts for the use of the term "Schul," or "Schule," applied to the synagogue by German Jews and Jews of German extraction.

Until recently almost every synagogue was the center of Jewish social activity. Whatever charity had to be dispensed among the deserving poor was furnished by the persons in congregational authority. In fact all "communal affairs" צרכי צבור were discussed and settled in the council of the synagogue. Such is still the case in the smaller Jewish centers.

The synagogue, as a devotional, educational and communal institution is, according to Tal-

mudic tradition, post-exilic in origin. At the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, the people held gatherings for the reading of the law and the recitation of prayers. The Temple and synagogue stood side by side. בתי כנישתא תניין לבית מקדש "The synagogue is second only to the sanctuary," said an ancient teacher.[2] In the second temple a hall known as "The hall of hewn stone" לשכת הגזית was devoted to synagogal purposes. Already before the destruction of the second temple (70 C. E.) the synagogue grew in prominence as a social factor. We are told in the Talmud, that synagogues flourished in all towns and villages of Palestine. There were some even in Jerusalem. The Palestinean synagogues mentioned as having arisen from time to time, are those of Lydda, Cæsarea, Nazareth, Capernaum, and thirteen at Tiberias. The later Babylonian synagogues, of which records have been preserved, are those of Nehardea, Huzal, and Mata Mechasia. Celebrated synagogues known to have been lo-

[2] Targum Ezek. 11:6.

cated beyond Palestine and its immediate surroundings are those of Alexandria, Antioch, Damascus, Thessalonica, Ephesus, Corinth, Athens, and Rome.

The architecture of synagogues is not according to any fixed plan. All sorts of designs have been followed, the Moorish predominating and the Gothic having been carefully avoided. Israel Abrahams, commenting on the architecture of the synagogue, says: "As to the shape of synagogues, no special form can be called Jewish. A famous authority of the last century maintained, that no Jewish law old or new restricted the fancy of synagogue architects in this respect. He, himself, authorized the choice of an octagonal form, and this shape is now rather popular on the continent. . . . The Temple courts — which were used for prayer meetings—were oblong or square, but there was at one time a prevalent notion in England that synagogues were round."[3]

The site chosen for the erection of syna-

[3] Abrahams: "Jewish Life in the Middle Ages," p. 30.

gogues is always prominent. Synagogues are usually built at street corners, near gateways, along running streams of water, or in open fields. The attempt, whenever possible, is made to build synagogues on elevated ground, in order that the house of God may be the most conspicuous structure. Rab, a teacher of the third century, remarks, that the city in which private residences tower above the synagogue, cannot escape destruction.[4] And Rab Ashi (352-427 C. E.) believes, that the preservation of the Babylonian city Sura in times of trying persecution must be attributed to the fact, that its synagogues surpassed all other structures in size. A custom worthy of notice is, that a synagogue was never torn down or abandoned before another existed to take its place.

The position of the synagogue is regulated by law. The majority of the synagogues face West and those, which do not, have their auditoriums so arranged that worshippers face

[4] Sabbath 11, a.

the East while praying. Or, to put it in different words, the entrance is in most instances on the west side of the building and the ark, toward which the worshippers turn while praying, is along the eastern wall. According to the Mishnah[5] Jews at the time of the existence of the temple faced the West while praying, as a protest against sun-worshippers who were in the habit of greeting the sun by turning toward it in the morning. When sun-worship ceased, about the time of the Israelitish dispersion 70 C. E., Jews living west of Jerusalem turned eastward as a sign of grief and hope, while those east of Jerusalem turned westward. Another reason for the existence of this custom is the passage:[6]

"And (they) pray unto Thee toward their land which Thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which Thou hast chosen and the house which I have built for Thy name."

Whether synagogues need to be built so that worshippers turn toward the East is a

[5] Succah 5:4.
[6] I Kings 8:48.

matter of dispute among the teachers of the Talmud. Rabbi Abin declared the custom a law only while the temple existed, and Rabbis Ishmael and Oshaiah believed the custom unnecessary on the ground that God is everywhere and not confined to one spot.

Although in synagogues there is a total absence of all images, portraits and statues because of the second commandment[7]

"Thou shalt not have any other gods before Me; Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, or the likeness of anything in the heavens above, the earth beneath, or the waters under the earth,"

the interior of synagogues is far from being severely plain. We often find, inscribed upon the walls, Scriptural passages bearing upon the house of God or glorifying God in one way or another. In some instances the decorations are costly. Tradition tells of the marvelous beauty of the Alexandrian synagogue. Spanish and Italian synagogues were especially famous for their decorative elaborateness. The lion is of course the favorite decoration. It was always

[7] Exodus 20:3, 4.

regarded the symbol of protection and reminded the worshipper of the words:[8]

"Like a lion's whelp, O Judah, from the prey, my son, thou risest."

The double triangle מגן דוד "The shield of David," although visible on the exterior and interior of almost every synagogue, is of anything but Jewish origin.[9]

Israel Abrahams remarks: "Some authorities applied the restriction (namely of decorating synagogues with images) only to the human figure. . . . Others forbade all representation of natural objects. . . . In the twelfth century the Cologne synagogue had painted glass windows and it was not an unknown thing for birds and snakes, probably grotesques, rather than accurate representations, to appear without Rabbinical sanction on the walls of the synagogue."[10]

In the majority of synagogues we find no

[8] Gen. 49:9.

[9] Friedlander's "Jewish Religion"; Jewish Encycl. Vol. VIII, p. 251.

[10] Abrahams, "Jewish Life in the Middle Ages," p. 29.

musical instruments. Wherever the organ exists it is a comparatively recent institution. The reason for the absence of instrumental music lies in the prohibition to play instruments on Sabbaths and Holy days[11] (as such playing is considered work) and in the desire to preserve apparent mourning for the destruction of the temple.

Only a small proportion of synagogues can boast of family pews. In most of them the women are separated from the men; the latter congregating in the so-called "court for men" עזרת אנשים, and the former in the so-called "court for women" עזרת נשים. To the court for men, women are not admitted. The court for women is, as a rule, a room adjoining the court for men, the two courts communicating by a window or balcony. If there is no separate apartment for women, the women are given seats behind the men and are curtained off from the latter. It is in this way that the women are enabled to follow the services. Gal-

[11] Erubin 104, a.

leries, like those in modern synagogues where family pews have not yet been introduced, were not known in earlier times. The separation of the sexes undoubtedly dates back to the עזרת נשים "the court for women" in the Temple.[12] The reasons urged at present for the exclusion of women from the main auditorium of some synagogues are, the Biblical precedent that women were not permitted to enter the premises of the sanctuary and the fear that their presence might distract the attention of the men in their devotions. Israel Abrahams tells, that formerly, in their own prayer meetings, the women were led by female precentors, some of whom acquired enviable reputations for efficiency. The epitaph of one of them, Urania of Worms, belonging perhaps to the thirteenth century, runs thus:

"This headstone commemorates the eminent and excellent lady Urania, the daughter of R. Abraham, who was the chief of the synagogue singers. His prayer for his people rose up unto glory.

And as to her, she, too, with sweet tunefulness

[12] Middoth 2:5.

officiated before the female worshippers to whom she sang the hymnal portions. In devout service her memory shall be preserved."[13]

The seats for the worshippers are in many instances arranged along the walls of the synagogue in order to leave the center of the auditorium perfectly free for the pulpit. In such instances the seats of the learned of the congregation are nearest to the eastern wall or immediately in front of the ark.

As a rule the auditorium consists of three parts corresponding to the three apartments of the temple in ancient Jerusalem. The first apartment, as one enters the door of the auditorium, corresponding to the temple court, is the space occupied by the congregation during worship. The second apartment, corresponding to the inner space of the temple, where altar, shew bread, table, and candelabra were found, consists of a platform with the שׁלחן (lit. "table") "reading desk." In the Talmud this platform is called "bema" (from the Greek βῆμα). It is known also by the name

[13] "Jewish Life in the Middle Ages," p. 26.

"almemar" corrupted from the Arabic "al-minbar," pulpit. The third apartment, corresponding to the "Holy of Holies" in the temple with the ark of the covenant, in which were deposited the two tablets of stone, consists of the ark with the scrolls of the law. A "curtain" פרכת separates the second and third apartments.

There is nothing requiring particular description in the first apartment—the space occupied by the congregation.

The second apartment, "bema," or "al-memar," is a raised platform. The officiating precentor, known as שליח צבור "messenger of the congregation" to the Most High, here conducts the services and reads the sections from the law and the prophets. It is also the place where all public announcements are made. In conducting the services the appointed readers in orthodox synagogues always face the East and hence have their backs turned to the congregation. The reading desk, also called כורסיא, is always decorated with a richly embroidered cover. In some synagogues the foundation of the bema extends several inches below the floor

of the auditorium, in order that the following thought may be literally exemplified:

"Out of the depths have I cried unto the Lord."[14]

If the bema is not built thus, special prayers directed to God are delivered from a place lower than the bema, usually the place between the bema and the ark.

In many synagogues there is no space between the bema and the ark—the bema being pushed forward toward the ark. Maimonides, a teacher of the twelfth century, fixes the bema in the center of the auditorium, like in the ancient Alexandrian synagogue, in order that the precentor might be heard equally well in all parts of the building. Joseph Caro, a teacher of the sixteenth century and author of the Shulchan Aruch, "the prepared table" (a code on the Jewish ritual and conduct, to which frequent references will be made), grants the privilege of moving the bema toward the ark. In Germany, Austria, England, France and America, Jews have built synagogues availing them-

[14] Ps. 130:1.

selves of this privilege, while in Portugal and Spain the opinion of Maimonides is faithfully followed.

Between the bema and the ark, that is, immediately in front of the ark, we find suspended the נר תמיד "perpetual lamp." It is constantly —as its name indicates—kept burning. It is made either of gold, silver or burnished brass. As an institution of the synagogue it is of comparatively recent establishment, not having been mentioned by Rabbinical teachers. Its Biblical authority is:

"And thou shalt command the children of Israel that they bring the pure olive oil beaten out for the lighting to cause the lamp to burn always. In the tabernacle of the congregation without the veil, which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before the Lord. It shall be a statute forever unto their generations, on behalf of the children of Israel."[15]

Symbolically the perpetual lamp attests the firm conviction of Jews, that the light of instruction will always issue from the synagogue.

The ark, called תבה or ארון or ארון הקודש

[15] Ex. 27:20, 21.

and occupying the middle of the east side of every synagogue, is constructed of either wood or marble. In earlier times it was simply a niche in the wall. It is the repository for the scrolls, several copies of which congregations almost always possess. Some congregations are known to own between thirty and forty. The ark is approached by steps leading to it from the second apartment. On the top of the ark are found two tablets, with the first two words of each of the ten commandments in Hebrew characters, representative of the two tablets of stone brought by Moses from Mt. Sinai. Immediately below these tablets the inscription דע לפני מי אתה עומד "Know before Whom thou art standing," is seen in many synagogues. The whole ark, except the tablets, or sometimes only the receptacle for the scrolls, is covered by a curtain, beautifully embroidered. This curtain is made either of satin, silk or velvet. A favorite figure on the curtain is a crown with the letters כ"ת the initials of כתר תורה "The crown of the law" below it. An inscription often found on the curtain is:

שויתי יהוה לנגדי תמיד I have always set the Lord before me." [16] On different occasions we find different-colored curtains. The curtain of the ark, for the most part, corresponds in color to that of the cover on the reader's desk and the robes on the scrolls. If, for example, red prevails on Sabbaths, purple is used on Passover, Feast of Weeks and Feast of Booths. White is, however, everywhere the color of the vestments on the New Year's festival and the Day of Atonement.

Formerly, the ark was portable, like the ark of the covenant. On certain extraordinary occasions, when on account of absence of rain a general fast was ordered, the ark with the scrolls was carried into the street where special services were conducted.

The scrolls found in the ark contain the five books of Moses in Hebrew characters. The text is unpointed and unpunctuated; that is, only the consonants are given. Neither are chapters and verses indicated. Every scroll is

[16] Ps. 16:8.

Curtain for Ark—*Parocheth*

known as a "sefer," "book"; as "torah," "law," or as "sefer torah," "the book of the law."

The special rules governing the making of the scrolls are given in Caro's Shulchan Aruch.[17] The "sefer torah," scroll, is a parchment roll written by hand upon the thoroughly cured skin of a Levitically clean animal. The skin of the calf or sheep is usually taken for this purpose, though the skin of other animals may be used. The ink is made of lamp-black. While the text is unpointed and unpunctuated the paragraphs are marked according to the Masora, some starting a new line, others leaving space at the end of the line. The parchment must be written upon one side only. When a leaf has been completed the writing must always be turned upward. If dust gathers on the written parchment it is regarded a mark of disrespect shown the law. Mistakes may be corrected, but no mistakes should be left uncorrected for more than thirty days. The margin alongside of the separate columns is regu-

[17] Yoreh Deah, Sefer Torah, §270-284.

lated by law. The width of a leaf of parchment, often consisting of several columns, should not exceed in measure the circumference of the scroll when closed. The separate leaves, when completed, are fastened together with the sinews of a clean animal, thus forming the scroll, and are then mounted on wooden rollers, the handles of which, protruding above and below, are of either wood, ivory or silver. The "sopher" scribe, writing the scroll must be not only an expert in his work but also a man of unquestioned piety, and must, while doing his work, allow nothing to distract his attention.

When the scroll is in the ark it is attired as follows: First it is held secure by a linen, silk, or velvet wrapper usually inscribed with the name of the donor. A silver clasp is sometimes used. The linen, silk, and velvet wrappers are in some localities the donations of the male children and are by them brought to the synagogue on the occasion of their first visit to the house of God. This first visit usually takes place as soon as possible after circumcision. The child is taken to the synagogue

and there it places the wrapper on the scrolls. In this event the wrapper contains, in Hebrew characters, the full names of the child and its parents. When the scroll is secure a robe is placed over it. Robes are of different colors, mostly corresponding to the color of the curtain, suspended in front of the ark, and are beautifully embroidered in gold. Some of the inscriptions embroidered on the robes are:

תורת יהוה תמימה "The law of the Lord is perfect."

מצות יהוה ברה "The commandment of the Lord is clear."

סומך צדיקים יהוה "The support of the righteous is the Lord."

כ׳ת meaning כתר תורה "The crown of the law."

Sometimes we find only the double triangle, the so-called shield of David.

In addition to the robe many a scroll is handsomely decorated with trimmings, known as כלי קודש "holy vessels." These vessels are in most instances made of silver. Over the upper rollers are placed artistically worked top-

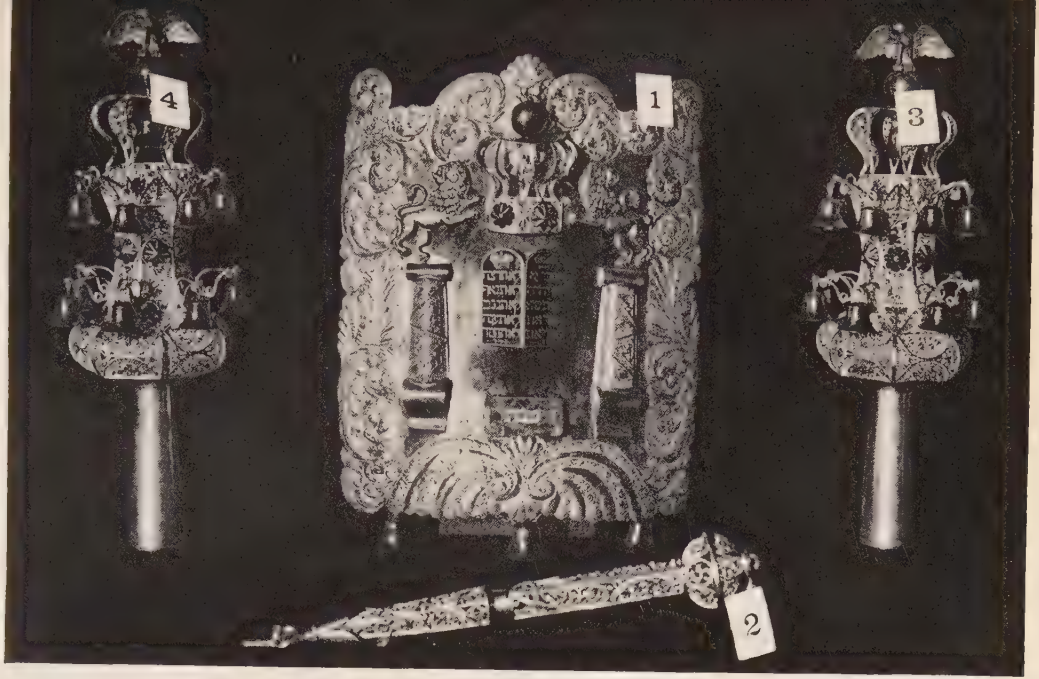
pieces with bells. Over the robe an elaborate breast plate is suspended by a chain. And over the breast plate extends a pointer, terminating in the figure of a hand, and hence called "yad" (hand), with which the reader points to the text while reciting the Pentateuchal portion. This pointer is suspended from the scroll by a chain and is often as much as twelve inches long. A fact worth mentioning is, that the top pieces at the upper end are decorated with a crown emblematic of the crown of the law. In addition to the crown decorating the breast plate are sometimes also the figures of lions—symbol of strength.

The scroll is read every Sabbath, usually between the morning service "shacharith" and the additional or forenoon service "musaf."

The recitation of the portion from the scrolls is called "the reading of the law," קריאת התורה The reading of the law once every seven years, we are told is enjoined in Scriptures.

"At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the Feast of Tabernacles when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God, in the place which He shall choose, thou

Torah with Robe and Ornaments



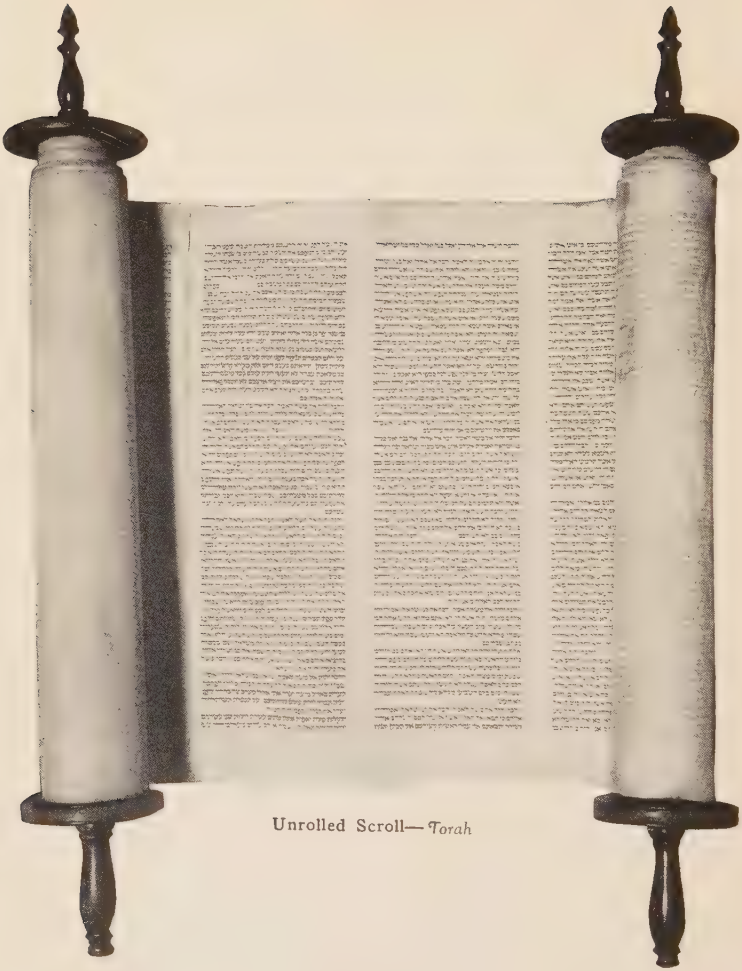
1 Silver Shield for Torah 2 Silver Pointer 3-4 Silver Ornaments for the Upper Part of Torah

shalt read the law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, women and children, and the stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law; and that their children, which have not known anything, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God."[18]

For the purpose of Sabbath readings the Pentateuch is divided into a large number of sections. There are twelve in Genesis, eleven in Exodus, ten in Leviticus, ten in Numbers and eleven in Deuteronomy; fifty-four in all. In a year of 12 lunar months, consisting of either 353, 354 or 355 days, there are at the most 51 Sabbaths. To get over the entire law in one year in such congregations, in which the annual cycle prevails, the combination of two consecutive sections into one takes place on some Sabbaths. The reading of the law is conducted in regular order beginning with the first chapter of Genesis, on the Sabbath immediately following the Festival of Rejoicing Over the Law, celebrated on the 23d day of Tishri. In

[18] Deut. 31:10-13.

order not to bring the law to an end at any time, the first chapter of Genesis is read on the Feast of Rejoicing Over the Law as soon as the book of Deuteronomy has been completed. The sections are known by names taken from one word or two words in their respective opening verses. Thus the first one is known as "Bereshith" (in the beginning), the second as "Noah," the third as "Lech Lecha" (Get thee out), and so on. On holidays the portions of the law read are usually those which contain some direct or indirect reference to the occasion celebrated or its implied message. If a holiday happens to fall on Sabbath, the regular Sabbath portion is set aside for the holiday section. On Sabbaths occurring on the new moon, on four Sabbaths immediately preceding Passover, and on holidays two scrolls are usually read. From the first the Sabbath or holiday section is read, while from the second an account of the special Biblical custom attaching to the specific occasion in question is added. Each section is called a sidra (order), and each sidra is divided into seven sub-sections. When the scroll



Unrolled Scroll— *Torah*

is put on the desk eight males are called to the bema. Every one of these recites the following blessing before the reading of a sub-section:

"Praise ye the Lord, Who is to be praised; praised be the Lord, Who is to be praised forever and aye."

"Praised art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has chosen us from among all nations and has given us His law. Praised art Thou, O Lord, Giver of the law."

Upon the completion of the sub-section the person called to the scroll recites this second benediction:

"Praised art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has given us a law of truth and has placed within us the longing for life eternal. Praised art Thou, O Lord, Giver of the law."

Originally every person called to the desk read his own sub-section. Later, however, in order not to embarrass persons unable to read the unpointed text, the precentor or reader, appointed for the purpose (בעל קורא) read the whole sidra. The only exception made is the occasion of a boy's Bar Mitzvah, confirmation —an event commemorating the attainment of his thirteenth birthday. Then the boy himself reads his portion. The order in which peo-

ple are called to the desk is as follows: First we have a representative of the priestly family of Aaron, "Cohen"; next a descendant of the house of Levi, "Levite"; and then six others, supposed to belong to the other tribes of Israel, and simply termed Israelites. The six, known as Israelites, are summoned to the desk as the third, the fourth, the fifth, the sixth, the seventh and the Maftir "he who is to conclude." The Maftir is included also on holidays. Among Portuguese Jews, as in many orthodox European and Asiatic synagogues, those called to the desk are summoned by their full Hebrew names. In earlier times this custom obtained among Jews everywhere.

The eighth person (Maftir), whose Pentateuchal sub-section consists of the last few verses of the seventh sub-section, is also expected to read the portion from the Prophets assigned for the Sabbath. It should be noted that a prophetical section is read on holidays as well as on the Sabbath. The subject matter of the prophetical section selected by the liturgists of the synagogue always treats a

theme similar to the one discussed in the Pentateuchal portion. The origin of the "Haphtaroth," prophetical sections, is a matter of dispute. One theory holds, that they originated in times of persecution, when Jews were forbidden to read the scroll. Another claims, that the Haphtaroth served as a protest against the Samaritans, who regarded only the Torah and not the other Scriptural writings holy. It is, however, more than likely that these prophetical sections were introduced as soon as the prophetical writings became a part of the Biblical canon.

The scroll is also read during the services on Sabbath afternoon (the section then always consisting of the opening sub-section of the portion of the following Sabbath), and on Mondays and Thursdays at the early morning service. The reading of the scroll on Mondays and Thursdays is said to have originated at the time of Ezra, who provided for such reading for the benefit of the country people. They came to the city on these days and could not, on account of the Sabbath law, which forbade

their travelling great distances, come to listen to the reading of the regular portion on the Sabbath day.

In some congregations, instead of an annual cycle of the reading of the Pentateuch, a three years' cycle, and in others even a seven years' cycle, obtains. The great majority of congregations, however, still adhere to the annual cycle.

The calling of persons to the desk for the recitation of benedictions over a sub-section has been discontinued by some congregations in order to maintain decorum during services, which is often materially impaired. In such instances the regularly officiating precentor is the only one to recite the benedictions.

It should be stated here, that the number of persons called to the bema in those congregations where the annual cycle obtains is 3 on Sabbath afternoons and week days; 4 on new moon and half holidays, "Chol Hammoed," by which is meant the festive week of Passover and Feast of Booths; 5 on festivals; and 6 on the Day of Atonement. These numbers given for

holidays and the Day of Atonement do not include the Maftir, the concluding section accompanied by a prophetical portion, added on these days, as has been before explained.

The manner of the reading of the law is worthy of specification. The section is usually sung. This is also the case in the reading of the Haphtarah, though the intonations of the Haphtarah and other portions of Scriptures like the Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther, set aside for reading on special sacred occasions, are different from that of the sections of the scrolls. The accents found in the Masoretic text of the Bible, are made to serve as musical notes to indicate how certain words are to be intoned. The Greek word τροπή (Trope) is the name given by German Jews to the peculiar chant, while the Hebrew "Neginah" (melody) is used in the same sense among Portuguese Jews. This chant has been developed into an elaborate system. Among the so-called Reform Jews, the chant is not used in the reading of the Scriptures. Nor is the chant of Pentateuchal sections the same on

all occasions and among all Jews. The chant for the New Year and Day of Atonement is different from that of the Sabbath, and that of German Jews from that of the Portuguese Jews. The custom of chanting the Bible is undoubtedly as old as the use of the Scriptures in the devotion of the synagogue. A Talmudical authority remarks:

"Whoever reads the Bible without pleasantness (i. e., modulation of the voice or chanting) and teaches the oral law without song, to him are applied the words taken from Ezekiel 20:25: 'I also gave them statutes which were not good.' "[19]

The removal of the scrolls from the ark before reading and their return to the ark after reading is accompanied with great solemnity. The character of the service is not uniform the world over. Jews located in sections widely separated from one another have different ritualistic methods of procedure. The one most common in Europe and America is given here.

[19] Megillah 29, b.

First a hymn of glorification is rendered, opening: "There is none among the gods like Thee, O Lord." The congregation rises while the ark is opened and the precentor steps before the ark reciting the words: "When the ark journeyed, Moses said: Arise, O Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered and let those who hate Thee flee before Thee. From Zion the law goes forth and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Praised be He, who gave the law in its holiness to Israel, His people." Then follow the declaration of the oneness of God and the proclamation of His greatness. From the ark the precentor goes with the scroll in solemn procession to the bema, where the ornaments, robe and wrapper are removed, and the scroll is prepared for reading. Before the reading takes place the scroll is unrolled to the extent of a few columns of the text and lifted up before the assembled congregation while the precentor exclaims:

"This is the law which Moses put before the children of Israel by command of the Lord."

The honor of closing and dressing the scrolls

is in most congregations conferred upon two worshippers, the one holding, while the other re-invests the scroll with wrapper, robe and ornaments.

When the scroll is returned to the ark songs of praise are again rendered, which conclude with the following exclamations:

"Valuable instruction I have given you. Forsake ye not my law. It is a tree of life to those who lay hold of it, and its supporters are happy. Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace. Cause us, O Lord, to return to Thee and we shall return. Renew our days as of old."

CHAPTER II

The Worshipper and the Week Day Service

In our attempt to present the religious customs and practices of Israel we shall, in this chapter, make in thought a visit to the Jewish house of worship and observe some of the special institutions worthy of note. There is perhaps no class of people to whom the house of worship is more sacred than to the Jew. The laws preventing its desecration are numerous and are framed to meet all violations of sanctity, in which men may indulge. The Jewish teachers of the second century placed the same emphasis upon respect for the synagogue as upon regard for the ancient temple, of which the synagogue is the substitute. They forbade laughing and talking within its walls.[1] At his entrance and departure the worshipper is, as

[1] Megillah 28, a.

they said, to conduct himself with decorum. They tell, that one should go quickly to the house of God, but leave it slowly.[2] Eating and drinking are prohibited in the synagogue.[3] Refuge from the heat and rain was not to be taken in it.[4] People are admonished to be among the first at its services.[5] Before entering the synagogue the hands should be washed. For this purpose a pitcher with water is found in the ante-room, corresponding to the laver before the sanctuary and temple. In some localities burial from the synagogue is forbidden because of the defilement of the holy place by the corpse. An exception is made only in case the dead is one learned in the law.

Upon close examination we find that a public service is never begun unless the quorum fixed by tradition is present. This quorum consists of ten men. Less than ten men is never regarded a congregation sufficiently large for pub-

[2] Sabbath 32, a.
[3] Megillah 28, a.
[4] Megillah 28, b.
[5] Baba Metzia 107, a.

lic devotion. In the Ethics of the Fathers we read:

"If ten are assembled and are engaged in the study of the law, the Shekhinah resides among them."[6]

It is on the basis of this opinion that the size of the quorum was fixed. While ten constituted a quorum in the earliest days of the existence of the synagogue, Treatise Soferim mentions that in Palestine services were once held with seven men.[7] Women do not count as members of the quorum. The Rabbinical law exempts women from the performance of all religious duties which are to be executed at a definite time.[8] However, in some instances of the modern occidental synagogue, not only women are counted in the congregational quorum, but also ten people are not considered absolutely necessary for holding public worship.

Many communities are in the habit of having ten persons attend services for an emolu-

[6] Aboth 3:4.
[7] Soferim 10:7.
[8] Kiddushin 1:7.

ment, in order that the conducting of a service be not prevented. During the Middle Ages, when in all probability this custom arose,[9] the persons engaged for this purpose were the older students of the Talmudic schools. Later, however, it became customary to select persons from the deserving poor.

While in the synagogue, worshippers keep their heads covered, a practice observed also by many persons when reading any and every Hebrew text, because literature written in the so-called "holy tongue" is considered specially sacred and its study is regarded a religious act. A not insignificant number of Jews consider it a sacrilege to go at any time with uncovered head. There is no Biblical warrant for this custom, although it is often stated, that as the high priest wore a head covering when officiating in the sanctuary, so should every Jew when praying. The wearing of the head gear is undoubtedly nothing more than a remnant of orientalism. Among Mohammedans and Par-

[9] Abrahams: "Jewish Life in the Middle Ages," p. 57.

sees the same practice obtains. Nor does the lengthy discussion of the Talmudical passage לא יקל את ראשו כנגד שער המזרח "One should not make his head light before the Eastern gate"[10] convince the student, that the wearing of the hat is anything more than a custom without foundation in law.

If some people consider the wearing of a head-covering an important feature in the devotion of the Jew, the cause is none other than the insistence of Paul of Tarsus, that men should sit in the church with uncovered head as the surest means of severing their connection with the synagogue. Says Paul:

"Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head." [11] [12]

In a number of Jewish congregations the head covering is removed during worship on the ground that occidental residence and ori-

[10] Berachoth 54, a.

[11] I Cor. 2:4, 7.

[12] For a fuller treatment of this custom in all its various aspects we refer to Fluegel's "Gedanken ueber Religioese Braeuche und Anschauungen."

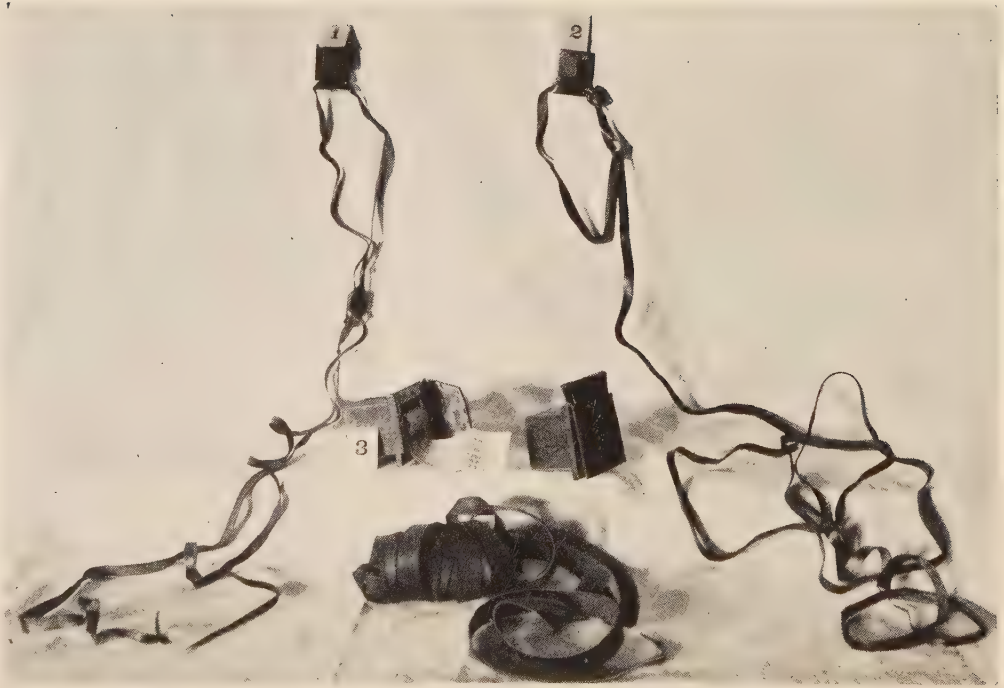
ental habits are incompatible. This is no new departure. Israel Abrahams tells, that on the Feast of Rejoicing Over the Law boys in the 15th century ascended the bema bare-headed during the reading of the Pentateuchal section.[13] Even adults were known to have prayed bare-headed in France.[14]

A point noteworthy in this connection is, that as the head is to be kept covered the hands are to be kept uncovered. Gloves must therefore be removed during devotion. This custom is based on the synonymous use of praying with the Biblical phrase "spreading forth the hands."

During the early morning prayers on week days, but not on Sabbaths and holidays, in the Jew's private as well as public devotions, males over thirteen years of age wear Tefillin (phylacteries), on the left arm and head. The Tefillin are two square boxes of hard parchment, each of which is called a "Bayith," receptacle, varying in size from half of a cubic

[13] Abrahams: "Jewish Life in the Middle Ages," p. 32.

[14] Geiger: Juedische Zeitschrift, III, 142.



1 Phylactery for Head

2 Phylactery for Arm
(*Tefillin*)

3 Rabbenu Tam's Phylacteries

inch to two and three cubic inches. Each receptacle rests on a base with protruding loop, through which a leather strap is drawn. The two ends of the strap are tied together, so that the knot formed by the strap of the phylactery for the head has the shape of the Hebrew letter "daleth" ד and the knot of the phylactery of the arm has the shape of the Hebrew letter "yad" י. On the Bayith of the phylactery of the arm we see no letter impressed, while on two sides of the exterior of the Bayith of the phylactery of the head we see the letter "shin" ש embossed. This "shin," together with the "daleth" and "yad," just referred to, spell the word שדי ("shaddai") "Almighty." The Bayith of the phylactery for the head is divided into four compartments. Into each one of these is put a piece of parchment containing one of the four sections of the Pentateuch, interpreted as commanding the wearing of the phylacteries. The parchment put into the first compartment, starting with the right side as worn on the head, contains the following:

"And the Lord spoke unto Moses saying, Sanctify

unto me all the first born whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.

And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place; there shall no leavened bread be eaten.

This day came ye out in the month of Abib.

And it shall be when the Lord shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee, a land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service in this month.

Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to the Lord.

Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days, and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters.

And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt.

And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the Lord's law may be in thy mouth; for with a strong hand hath the Lord brought thee out of Egypt.

Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year."[15]

[15] Ex. 13:1-10.

The second compartment contains these passages:

"And it shall be when the Lord shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as he sware unto thee and unto thy fathers and shall give it thee.

That thou shalt set apart unto the Lord all that openeth the matrix and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the male shall be the Lord's.

And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it then thou shalt break his neck; and all the first born of man among thy children shalt thou redeem.

And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage;

And it came to pass when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the Lord slew all the first born in the land of Egypt, both the first born of man and the first born of beasts; therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all that openeth the matrix being males; but all the first born of my children I redeem.

And it shall be for a token upon thine hand and for frontlets between thine eyes; for by strength of hand the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt." [16]

In the third compartment are the words:

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord, our God, is one Lord.
And thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all

[16] Ex. 13:11-16.

thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart;

And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house and on thy gates." [17]

The parchment in the fourth compartment reads:

"And it shall come to pass if ye shall harken diligently unto my commandments, which I command you this day, to love the Lord, your God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul,

That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season; the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.

And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full.

Take heed to yourselves that your heart be not deceived and ye turn aside and serve other gods, and worship them;

And then the Lord's wrath be kindled against you,

[17] Deut. 6:4-9.

and He shut up the heaven that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the Lord giveth you.

Therefore shall ye lay up these, my words, in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.

And ye shall teach them, your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down and when thou risest up.

And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thine house and upon thy gates." [18]

The Bayith of the phylactery for the hand consists of only one compartment, into which is put a parchment containing the above four sections written continuously. The materials used in the making of the phylacteries must be of the skin of Levitically clean animals and the sections indicated must be written according to the rules governing the writing of the scrolls. The Talmudists trace every feature of the phylacteries, certainly without foundation, back to Moses, as they do almost every other ceremonial institution known to them. Although

[18] Deut. 11:13-20.

the straps of the phylacteries are usually of black leather, the use of black leather could not have been universal, as one Rabbi[19] is said to have fastened his phylacteries with purple ribbons. The Biblical passage, taken as the legal basis of the phylacteries, is the repeated Pentateuchal command, "and thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes." This Biblical command is surely not to be taken literally, but figuratively. It, very likely, means that the Israelite is to cherish and remember the words of the Lord.

In putting the phylacteries on the body the phylactery of the arm is taken first. The box is fixed firmly on the naked left arm, upon the biceps muscle, above the elbow, and, when this is done, the worshipper recites the benediction:

"Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to lay the phylacteries."

Hereupon the strap is wound seven times

[19] Menachoth 34-36.

about the arm below the elbow. Then the phylactery for the head is put on with the box placed in the middle of the forehead below the hair and the two straps are arranged to hang forward over the shoulders, one on each side. While putting on this phylactery the following benediction is recited:

"Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments and enjoined upon us the commandment of the phylactery."

Returning to the phylactery of the hand, its strap is wound in succession three times about the middle finger, once about the fourth, once about the middle, and finally around the whole hand. While this is done the following words are recited:

"I betroth thee unto me forever; I betroth thee unto me in righteousness, in judgment, in kindness and in mercy. I betroth thee unto me in faithfulness and thou shalt know the Lord." [20]

The worshipper then petitions God to consider the performance of the commandment re-

[20] Hosea 2:21, 22.

garding the phylacteries, as though all six hundred and thirteen commandments, of which the law of Moses consists, had been faithfully executed. Here follows the morning devotion.

When the devotion is ended the phylacteries are forthwith removed, that of the head being taken first. In putting them aside the straps are twisted around the base of the phylacteries. The phylacteries, when not in use, are kept as a rule in a bag of velvet or silk, beautifully embroidered with the shield of David, or otherwise ornamented. While today phylacteries are worn by most Jews, only during their morning devotion, some people formerly wore them all day. There are some persons who lay two kinds of phylacteries; those of Rashi, a teacher of the 12th century, in whose phylacteries the Biblical sections of the parchment are written in the order stated above, and those of Rashi's grandson, Rabbi Jacob, known as Rabbenu Tam, who held that the inverse of the order given by Rashi should be the order of the Biblical sections on the parchments. The Karaites, a sect established in the eighth cen-

tury by Anan Ben David, denying the authority of Rabbinical tradition and adhering only to the Bible, do not lay phylacteries. Phylacteries have fallen into disuse also among many Jews of today.

The term "Tefillin" reminds one of "tefillah," prayer, and hence denotes things used during prayer. Originally it may have meant ornament. It is a substitute for the Biblical (totafah) "frontlet." Its English equivalent, phylacteries, is derived from the Greek φυλακτήρια not because they serve, like the φυλακτήρια, as amulets, but because the tefillin resemble the phylacteria in external appearance. Placed on arm and head they are to be at present as in the past reminders to cherish with the heart and to contemplate with the mind the law of God.

During the morning service every male adult wears also a (talith) praying scarf. The reader wears the talith on all occasions. In some congregations mourners wear it during the benediction in which they extol God's wisdom and greatness. On the Fast of Ab in commemora-

tion of the destruction of Jerusalem, the talith is put on before the afternoon service in place of being put on at the beginning of the morning service. Among the Portuguese Jews even boys wear a talith. Some people have two praying scarfs, one for week days and another of better material for Sabbaths and holidays. The talith usually is one of the remembrances given a boy on the occasion of his thirteenth birthday, the time of his religious majority.

The talith is a rectangular piece of linen, wool or silk cloth. Some teachers objected to the linen praying scarf. The talith usually has blue or black stripes near its corners running all the way across the material and is decorated with a crown (atarah), consisting of a silk ribbon or a strip of either silver or gold passementerie, running along the exterior upper part, so that, when put on, the "crown" fits around the neck. If the crown is of silver or gold it must be the pure metal and should be so marked. On each of the four corners of the talith are fringes—linen fringes for the linen talith, silk fringes for the silk talith, and woolen

1 Large Talith
2 Fringe for Talith
3 Atarah—Silver Collar for Talith

fringes for the woolen talith. Silk, wool and linen must not be mixed, the mixture of various materials being forbidden by Biblical law.[21] Should they be mixed the praying shawl is unfit for ritualistic use. These fringes are attached in obedience to the following Biblical injunction:

"Speak unto the children of Israel and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments, throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of their borders a cord of blue; and it shall be unto you for a fringe that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes after which ye go astray." [22]

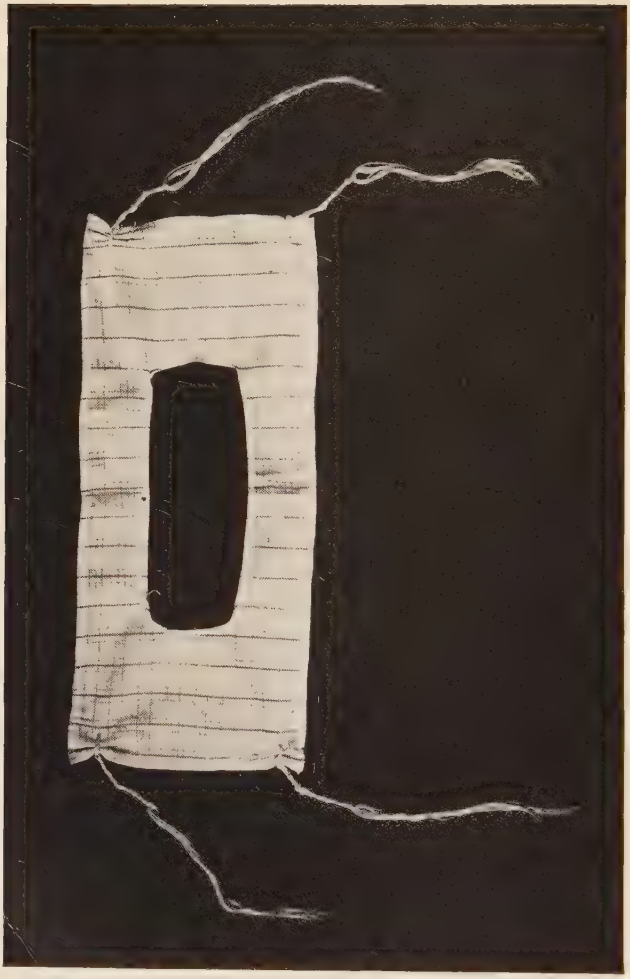
Another passage supposed to enjoin the use of the talith is:

"Thou shalt make for thyself fringes upon the four corners of your garments with which thou coverest thyself." [23]

In view of the fact, that the exact shade of the prescribed purple cord in the fringe can-

[21] Lev. 19:19; Deut. 22:11.
[22] Numb. 15:38, 39.
[23] Deut. 22:12.

not be procured, white is used exclusively. Already in Talmudic times, about the fifth century of the Christian era, white was substituted for the purple cord, owing to the difficulties of procuring the proper shade of purple. The material for the fringes must be manufactured for their express purpose. If of wool, they must be of wool carefully shorn and not plucked from the sheep. The fringes must be spun by Jews. They may be spun by non-Jews, only provided a Jew supervises the work. The fringes are put in a hole about an inch from the edge of the talith. The manner of their attachment is the following: Four threads, one of which is longer than the others, are passed through the hole; the two parts of the threads are bound together by the longer thread in a double knot; then the longer part of the longer thread is wound seven times about the seven halves of the four threads; then follow eight windings, then eleven, and then thirteen windings, and after each set of windings two knots are made. According to the Kabbalah, these knots and windings have a secret mean-



Small Talith—*Arba-Kanfoth*

ing. The windings, thirty-nine in all, correspond to the numerical value of the letters constituting the two words יהוה אחד "The Lord is One," since each letter of the Hebrew alphabet has numerical significance.

The talith is worn either carefully folded over the shoulders, open and hanging over the back, or often over the head. When put on, the worshipper recites:

"Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to encircle ourselves with fringes."

The merit attached to wearing the fringes is considered very great, as great as that of laying the phylacteries. The talith, when folded, is usually stored away in a beautiful bag made for the purpose. The bag is of either silk or velvet and beautifully embroidered.

In distinction to the talith "gadol," the large praying scarf, used during public devotions, there is the smaller praying scarf with fringes, used by all males, young boys included. It is known also by the name of "arba kanfoth,"

the four cornered garment. It consists of any piece of cloth with an aperture in the center large enough to allow the head to pass through, so that half of it falls over and rests on the back, while the other half falls over and rests on the chest. It is usually worn below the outer garments and is put on in the morning, immediately after washing. When put on, this benediction is recited:

"Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments and enjoined upon us the command with regard to the fringes."

The "arba kanfoth" is not removed again until the wearer retires for the night. The small praying scarf undoubtedly originated at the time of persecution, when Jews were obliged to practice their ceremonies secretly. Like the phylacteries the praying scarf has fallen into disuse among some Jews.

CHAPTER III

The Sabbath Service

From institutions characteristic of the week-day services let us proceed to those marking the Sabbath. The Jewish Sabbath and holy days do not begin with midnight, but with sundown of the day preceding, and end with the following sundown. This custom is based on the oft-recurring phrase in the Biblical creation story, " It was evening, and it was morning " (the evening always preceding the morning in the mention of the day). In many synagogues the Sabbath is not welcomed in any other way than by special hymns and songs. However, into a great number of synagogues a ceremony called the " Kiddush," a feature of the Sabbath sanctification in the Jewish home, has found its way. The "Kiddush" consists of the lifting up of a cup of wine by the precentor at the close of the evening devotion. In

doing this the precentor praises God the Creator of the Universe (Who is reported to have rested on the seventh day), for the creation of the fruit of the vine and for the institution of the Sabbath. The " Kiddush " runs as follows:

"And it was evening and it was morning the sixth day.

And the heavens and earth were finished and all their hosts. And on the seventh day God had finished His work which He had made, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because He rested thereon from all His work which God had created and made. Praised art Thou Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine.

"Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us by His commandments, and has taken pleasure in us, and in love and favor has given us His holy Sabbath as an inheritance, a memorial of the creation, that day being also the first of the holy convocations in remembrance of the departure from Egypt, for Thou hast chosen us, and sanctified us above all nations and in love and favor hast given us Thy Holy Sabbath as an inheritance. Praised art Thou O Lord, Who hallows the Sabbath."

Having concluded his benedictions the precentor does not drink from the cup, but places

the cup upon the reading desk to be handed around among the boys attending the services. The sanctification of the day with wine takes place, on the eve of all sacred days except on fast days, in congregations where the sanctification (Kiddush) has become a fixed institution. Although according to the Talmud [1] the "Kiddush" belonged to the evening meal in the home, אין קדוש אלא במקום סעודה the institution found its way into the public devotion of the synagogue. According to the teachers of the third century the synagogue was the lodging place for strangers. For this purpose separate apartments were fitted up. In order to sanctify the day with the proper joy, "for it is the wine which rejoiceth the heart of man," the Kiddush was instituted at the close of the evening service, more especially since wine was no doubt not served at the free meals with which strangers were furnished. Although the House of Worship is no longer devoted to giving strangers lodging, the Kiddush has nevertheless been retained in many synagogues.

[1] Pesachim 101, a.

As the Sabbath is welcomed with a special institution in the synagogue, so it is concluded after sunset on Saturday upon the appearance of three stars in the horizon. This concluding institution bears the name "Habdalah," separation, distinction. The "Habdalah" has been preserved in all synagogues, the members of which believe in strict adherence to the Sabbath law as laid down by the Rabbis. It is the signal to the worshipper that he may again attend to work as indicated in the Rabbinical maxim,

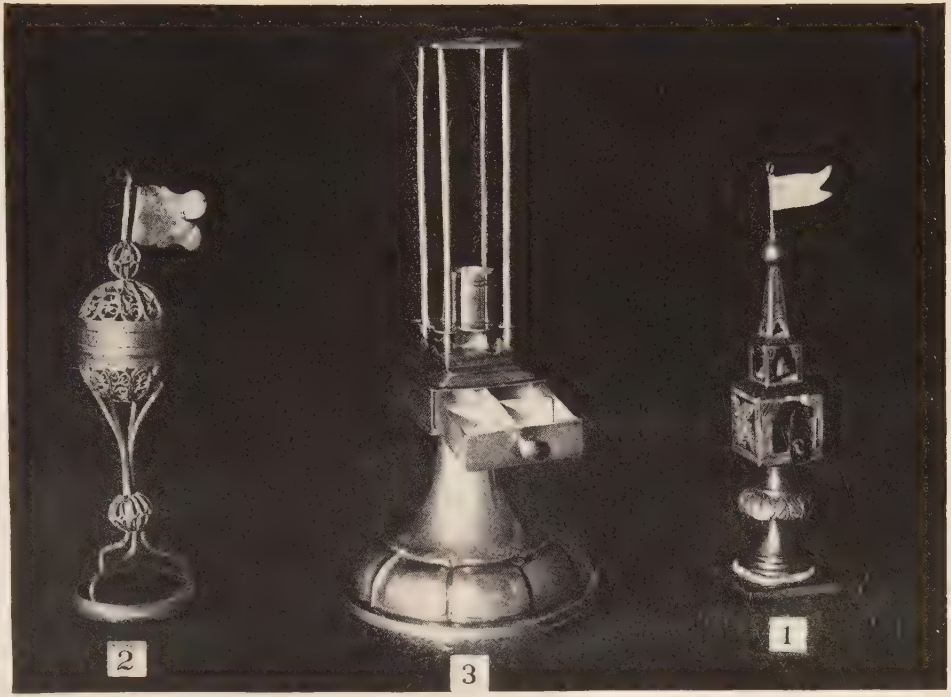
אסור לו לאדם שיעשה חפציו קודם שיבדיל

"Man is forbidden to attend to his needs until he has conformed to the 'Habdalah.'" [2]

Originally the "Habdalah" consisted of the interpolation of a special benediction in the body of the evening service, but later its present form was added.

The "Habdalah" is conducted as follows: Wine is poured into a goblet until it overflows into the saucer beneath. The goblet is then

[2] Sabbath 150, a.



1 and 2 Spice Boxes for Habdalah

3 Candlestick for Habdalah

lifted up by the precentor with his right hand. At the same time he holds in his left hand a box containing sweet smelling spices, while the sexton or some young boy in attendance at the services holds a burning taper. The reader begins the ceremony by intoning the words:

"Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord, Yah, is my strength and my song. He is also become my salvation, and ye shall draw water with joy from the fountains of salvation. Salvation is with the Lord. May Thy blessing be on Thy people. Selah. The Lord of Hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. The Jews were once favored with delight and joy, gladness and honor. Thus may it also be with us. I will lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord."

Hereupon follows the benediction over the goblet of wine:

"Praised art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine."

Putting down again the goblet the precentor recites the benediction over the spices. It reads:

"Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who creates diverse species of spices."

Opening the box and inhaling some of the fragrance the precentor proceeds to the blessing over the light. He holds his hands over the burning taper and says:

"Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who creates the light of the fire."

Taking the burning taper from the person who has held it, the precentor extinguishes it in the wine, of the saucer, and, while doing so, says:

"Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has made a distinction between things sacred and profane, between light and darkness, between Israel and other nations, between the seventh day and six days of labor. Praised art Thou O Lord, Who has made distinction between things sacred and profane."

The various elements of the Habdalah are not without their symbolical significance. The principal meal of the day was taken after sundown. Light and burning incense marked its special character. These could not be procured on the Sabbath, on which the use of fire was prohibited in the words: "Ye shall not kindle a fire in your dwellings,"[3] and therefore had to

[3] Ex. 35: 3.

be enjoyed upon the conclusion of the Sabbath. To-day the spice, the substitute for the incense, is according to some teachers made to stand for the pleasure which the Sabbath brings, while the light is to remind one of God's creation on the first day, to which the approaching day of the week corresponds. The overflowing of the cup with wine is symbolical of the enjoyment of God's unbounded grace for which the Jew hopes. The placing of the hands over the light by the precentor, when he reaches the words "Between light and darkness," is simply to illustrate the words by showing the light inside of the hands and the shadow outside of them.

The Habdalah is also celebrated at the conclusion of holidays, but with this difference, that the blessing of God as Creator of the light is omitted, since on holidays, excepting the Day of Atonement, fire could be handled. On the night of the Day of Atonement the blessing over the spices is omitted from the Habdalah, unless the Day of Atonement happens to occur on a Sabbath, in which case all four blessings are recited. The Habdalah undergoes a change also,

if the Sabbath is followed by the ninth day of Ab, a fast day in commemoration of the destruction of Jerusalem. In this event only the blessing over the light is pronounced on Saturday night, that of the spices is omitted, and the remaining two blessings are recited Sunday after the fast.

The goblets used, both in the sanctification and the conclusion of the Sabbath, are of different materials and of various designs. The more costly one is always used for the sanctification. The goblets are in the shape of either cups or tumblers. If the goblet is of silver, it is as a rule engraved with Hebrew characters.

The spice boxes used at the conclusion of the Sabbath also vary both in material and design. A popular box is one made of cedar wood said to be imported from the Lebanon. Boxes of this kind are usually inscribed with the Hebrew for "Jerusalem." If the box consists of silver it is usually in the form of a tower with a silver flag flying on the top. Spice boxes range in size from three to twelve inches. The collection of Jewish ceremonial objects at the Smithsonian

Institution at the United States National Museum in Washington contains a spice bottle made of china with its neck in oxidized silver. The taper used is always of pure wax. It consists either of one piece or three pieces twisted together. It is used either with or without a candlestick, but mostly without one. It must be kindled by none but the observing Jew, who is forbidden to touch fire on the Sabbath. In addition to these two institutions there are no others marking the services on the Sabbath in the synagogue.

CHAPTER IV

Passover, Pentecost and the Fasts.

The ceremonial institutions, marking the observance of Jewish holidays in the synagogue proper, constitute the subject matter of this and the next chapter. The occasion engaging our attention first is "Pesach," Passover, because it is the first festival celebrated in the order of the Jewish calendar months. Before proceeding to a description of its peculiar public observances, a word on the Jewish religious calendar is not only in order, but also necessary. I call the calendar religious, because in matters non-religious or secular, that mode of reckoning obtains among Jews which their non-Jewish neighbors follow.

The Jewish calendar is the lunar calendar. Every month consists of either 29 or 30 days, and is regulated by the revolution of the moon around the earth. New moon always indicates

the beginning of the new month. The ordinary year consists of twelve lunar months, making 353, 354, or 355 days in all. Noting from this difference between the lunar year and the solar year of 365 days, that in a very short time holidays would be shifted very far from their appointed season, the question arises, in what way is this difficulty offset? Seven times in every cycle of 19 years, as in the Metonic calendar, provision is made for a leap year, by the addition of a thirteenth month. The leap years are the third, sixth, eighth, eleventh, fourteenth, seventeenth and nineteenth of every cycle of nineteen years. The names of the months, which are of Babylonian origin, a fact to which the Talmud testifies, are Nisan, Iyar, Sivan, Tammuz, Ab, Ellul, Tishri, Heshvan, Kislev, Tebeth, Shebat, Adar, while the name of the thirteenth month in case of leap year is Adar Sheni, second Adar. The first month, Nisan, occurs in spring and begins in either March or April. Nisan is made the first month because in this month the exode from Egypt, marking the beginning of Israel's national life, took

place. The Jewish calendar is so arranged that the first day of the seventh month, Tishri, cannot fall on Sunday, Wednesday or Friday (in order to prevent the Day of Atonement from occurring on Friday or Sunday, because the preparation of food is forbidden on the Sabbath), and to prevent the last day of the Feast of Booths from happening on Saturday. Whenever the beginning of Tishri threatens to fall on Sunday, Wednesday or Friday a day is added to the passing year and taken from the immediately following one.

In the earliest times great difficulty attached to the observance of holidays on the same day by all Jews, but the difficulty was easily met. The new moon had to be proclaimed by the Synhedrin. As soon as two witnesses testified before this august body to the appearance of the new moon and their testimony was found to be based on fact, the people living in Palestine, Syria and Babylonia were notified of the new moon, either by messengers or fire signals given on top of hills. If no witnesses were found to testify, the day, on which the new

moon was expected, was added to the preceding month. The celebration of festivals depended altogether upon the proclamation of the new moon by the Synhedrin. There were, however, communities, whom word could not reach in time for the observance of the month's beginning celebrated as a half holiday. In order to effect simultaneity of observance among all Jews, those living too far from the seat of the Synhedrin, to be informed in time, celebrated not only two days at the beginning of the month, namely, the last day of the passing month and the first day of the coming month, but also two days of the festive seasons, on which, according to Scriptures, a holy convocation was ordered. Rosh Hashanah (the first day of the 7th month, the day of Memorial) was observed even by Palestinean Jews for two days, while the Day of Atonement was observed everywhere for only one day, owing to the strain which fasting produced on the human body. In the great majority of congregations the celebration of holidays for two days is still continued, although unnecessary since the forma-

tion of an exact calendar. Jews have been in possession of a correctly computed calendar since the middle of the fourth century, the work of Hillel II, or Hillel the younger, as he is commonly called.

In order not to neglect the observance of days commanded by Jewish law, every member of the synagogue, as a rule, provides himself with a calendar every year. The Hebrew equivalent for calendar is "Luach," which originally denotes "table" or "tablet." These calendars contain not only the Hebrew dates and the corresponding secular dates, but also indicate festivals and holy seasons, and the sections read from the scrolls in the synagogue on the various Sabbaths of the year.

But to return to (Pesach) Passover! It is the holiday celebrated from the eve of the 15th of Nisan (either March or April) for seven days among some Jews, and for eight days among most of them, in commemoration of the deliverance of ancient Israel from Egyptian slavery. It is known by the name "Feast of unleavened bread," because of the absence of

all leaven from Jewish homes and the use of only the unleavened as enjoined in Exodus 12:15; 13:7; and other passages. Only the first and seventh days are, according to Scriptures, holy convocations; while the rest are half holidays, although, as indicated in the discussion of the Jewish calendar, the second and the additional eighth days are dignified as full holidays. According to the Shulchan Aruch, the work of Joseph Caro, referred to before, no mourning addresses are to be delivered during the whole month of Nisan, on account of the joy which should mark the celebration of Israel's emancipation from slavery. Fasting was also interdicted, with the exception of the fast enjoined upon the first born males on the day preceding Passover, in commemoration of the fact, that the first born Israelites were spared the 10th plague which befell Egypt. If the eve of Passover happens to fall on Saturday the first born fasts on Thursday preceding.

Passover is more of a family feast, provided the number of ceremonial institutions deter-

mines its character. In the synagogue proper there are very few special features to be observed in addition to the reading of psalms of thanksgiving and glorification, incorporated into the regular service or taking the place of a part of it. During the forenoon, in the additional service of the first day of Passover, which follows immediately upon the return of the scrolls to the ark, the prayer for rain recited during the entire autumn and winter, beginning with the "Feast of Assembly" to be spoken of later, is discontinued, and the prayer for dew is inserted in its place. The reading of these prayers is, as may be readily seen, based altogether upon Palestinean climatic conditions, and hardly upon conditions obtaining in other countries.

A custom worthy of note, which is begun immediately after the evening service on the eve of the second day of Passover, and continued until the Feast of Weeks, namely for 50 days, is the counting of the "Omer." An "Omer" is a measure about the size of a half of a gallon. It contained a small specimen of the first har-

vest, brought by the ancient Israelites as an offering to the priest, when, as pilgrims, they came to Jerusalem on this feast. The institution of counting is based on the following:

"And ye shall count unto you from the morrow, after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering, seven Sabbaths shall ye complete; even unto the morrow, after the seventh Sabbath, shall ye number fifty days." [1]

The counting is preceded by a blessing, which reads:

"Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us by His commandments, and has commanded us to count the days of the Omer."

The manner of counting is as follows: "This day is the——day since the Omer."

After seven days the number of weeks in the Omer is also specified. The days of counting are called the "Sefirah." During this time Jews do not marry or give banquets, as it is a season replete with sad memories. Massacres of Jews took place at this time both during the reign of the Emperor Hadrian and the Crusades. The

[1] Lev. 23: 15; 16.

33d day of the Omer, the 18th of Iyar, is, however, excepted. Joyous occasions may be celebrated at this time, as according to tradition a plague which raged among the disciples of Rabbi Akibah (135 C. E.), was on this day stayed. In some congregations a tablet is suspended from the wall of the synagogue indicating the exact day of the Omer season.

Before closing the subject of Passover it should be stated that on it the "Song of Songs" is read, owing to the seasonable suggestion of the verse: "Behold the winter is gone," [2] and because the "Song of Songs" is by the Rabbis said to teach the espousal of Israel the beloved and God the Lover which took place at the time of the first Passover in grey antiquity.

On the 6th day of the 3d month, called Sivan, occurring either in May or June, Jews celebrate a feast, which according to Deuteronomy [3] is called "Feast of Weeks," because occurring at the expiration of seven full weeks after the

[2] Can. 2: 15.
[3] Deut. 16: 10.

second day of Passover. In Lev. 23: 16 it is identified with the 50th day of the counting of the Omer. According to Ex. 23: 16, it is the Feast of the early harvest gathered in Palestine, on which day the offering of the first fruit had to be brought to Jerusalem. This custom of bringing the offering of the last fruit has been replaced in many an occidental synagogue by decorating the Jewish house of worship with trees, plants, and flowers. The Feast is known also by the name "Day of the Giving of the Law," because of an existing tradition to the effect, that the revelation of God's word to Israel at Mount Sinai took place on the 6th day of the 3d month. Often termed the marriage anniversary of Israel to God, a great portion of the modern European and American Synagogues has selected this day as the time, on which young men and women are confirmed, or formally accepted as active members of their faith. In addition to selected holiday prayers and chants the day is not celebrated by distinct ceremonies. The Biblical scroll read on this festival is the book of Ruth, because it tells of

Ruth's acceptance of the true faith and the harvest of the first fruits in the fields of Boaz.

In many congregations, the night preceding the Feast of Weeks is observed in the school rooms of the synagogue by a watch, during which, passages from the scriptures and Talmudical books are recited. This institution has its origin in the three days' preparation enjoined upon ancient Israel.[4] A similar watch is held the 7th night of the Feast of Tabernacles, to be explained later. The watch in most cases includes a repast. During Medieval times the Feast of Weeks was the occasion, on which every male child at 5 years of age and at a later age if physically weak, was introduced to school life. He was given his first lesson in Hebrew, and in the synagogue was offered the opportunity of hearing the ten commandments read from the scroll, since these constitute a part of the day's scriptural section.[5]

On the 17th of the fourth month, Tammuz, a

[4] Ex. 19: 10-12.
[5] "Jewish Life in the Middle Ages," p. 348.

fast day is observed in the synagogues conforming to Rabbinical law, in commemoration of the breach made in the wall of Jerusalem. Another fast is celebrated on the 9th of the fifth month, Ab, in memory of the destruction of both the first and second Temples. During the three weeks intervening between these two fasts, many Jews abstain from pleasure and the use of meat in their diet. Some impose this restriction upon themselves only during the eight days immediately preceding the 9th of Ab. The fast of Tammuz, like all other fasts, except the Day of Atonement, commences at daybreak, but the fast of Ab lasts, like the Day of Atonement, for twenty-four hours, from evening until evening. The restrictions, which the Jew puts on himself on these occasions, are endured as a mark of his mourning over the downfall of the holy city. These two fasts are ignored in a number of synagogues, because their constituents regard the downfall of Jerusalem and Israel's dispersion an opportunity given, in the wisdom of Providence, to Israel for the fulfillment of its mission, although the memory of

Jerusalem is cherished by all Jews. During the day of these two fasts various elegies are recited. On the fast of Ab, the book of Lamentations is the scroll designated for reading in the synagogue and is chanted in distinctive minor key.

In this connection it is necessary to point to some of the other fasts, observed by many Jews, and to indicate the reasons for their celebration. They are the Fast of Gedaliah on the third day of the seventh month, Tishri (celebrated on account of the murder of Gedaliah, Governor of Jerusalem); the Fast of Tebeth, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Tebeth (in memory of the commencement of the siege of Jerusalem); and the Fast of Esther, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar, or in case of leap year the thirteenth day of the thirteenth month, Adar Sheni (in commemoration of the contemplated slaughter of the Jews of Persia).

CHAPTER V

The Tishri Holidays and the Half Holidays

We now approach the study of the most important days for modern Jews. They are those from the first to the tenth day of the seventh month, Tishri. Taken together they are known as "Yamim Neroim," solemn days, and "Asereth Y'me Teshubah," ten days of Penitence. Their purpose is to prompt the Jew to self-examination and reconciliation with God. The first of these days is called "Rosh Hashanah," New Year—a name the Biblical writers do not know. In the Bible [1] it is termed "Yom Teruah," day of blowing the alarm, and "Zichron Teruah," memorial of blowing the alarm. The terms "Day of Memorial" and "Day of Judgment" are also applied to this day. It is not our pur-

[1] Numb. 29: 1.

pose here to explain how the first of the seventh month instead of the first day of the first month served as the beginning of the New Year. Suffice it to say, that the first of Tishri was in many respects the commencement of the year. In this month the Jubilee year began, slaves were emancipated and landed property reverted to its original owner.

The most prominent feature in the public devotion of the synagogue consists of the blowing of the ram's horn. Long before the arrival of the festival its notes are heard. The whole of the preceding month (Ellul) is regarded a month of preparation. "Selichoth," special prayers for forgiveness of sin and the blowing of the Shofar mark the preparation. This month of preparation takes its character from a well-known tradition. It is reported, that on the first of Ellul Moses ascended Mt. Sinai for the third time and returned on the tenth of Tishri, with the assurance of God's pardon to Israel. While in Biblical times the Shofar was used for all sorts of announcements, like that of New Moon and festivals, the year of release,

the call to battle, as signal of victory, and as an instrument in processions, its purpose on this holiday is to rouse Jews to the serious contemplation of their sinfulness and their duty to lead a godly life. Saadya, a teacher of the tenth century, holds, that the Shofar reminds Jews of the creation, their duty to God, the revelation on Mt. Sinai, the teachings of the prophets, the destruction of the Temple, the binding of Isaac as a sacrifice, imminent danger, the Day of Judgment, the redemption of Israel, and the resurrection.

The Shofar is made of a ram's horn flattened by heat. It is always crooked and is finished with a mouth-piece. It is absolutely devoid of all decorations.

The Shofar is blown for the first time on New Year before the scrolls are returned to the ark and is preceded by the following benedictions:

"Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to hear the sound of the Shofar.

"Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us and caused us to enjoy this season."

There are four kinds of sounds produced by the Shofar:

(a) Tekiah—the unbroken sound.

(b) Shebarim—the broken sound.

(c) Teruah—the wave-like sound.

(d) The long Tekiah—the prolonged unbroken sound.

These four sounds are arranged in three sets of blasts.

The first is Tekiah, Shebarim, Teruah; sounded three times in succession.

The second is Tekiah, Shebarim, Tekiah; also sounded three times in succession.

The third is Tekiah, Teruah, Tekiah; sounded three times, with this exception, that the last Tekiah is the prolonged Tekiah.

After every set of blasts a pause follows, during which devotional reflections are recited. The first of these sets of blasts is directed to the angel Sharshia; the second to the angel Tartiel; and, after the third set, all angels are implored to help worshippers to become thoroughly imbued with the meaning of the Shofar's sounds. The doctrine with regard to these

Different Sizes of Ram's Horn—*Shofar*

angels was introduced by the Kabbalists and is not Jewish.

In the Mussaf services, the service following the return of the scrolls to the ark, there are again three sets of blasts with prayers intervening between the first and second, and the second and third sets of blasts. If the first day of the New Year occurs on the Sabbath the Shofar is not sounded, owing to the labor it entails. The blowing then takes place only on the second day. In some congregations, where New Year is celebrated for one day only, the ritual provides for the blowing of the Shofar, even on Sabbath.[2]

The person blowing the Shofar must perform this service standing on the bema of the synagogue. The Shofar when blown is held in the right hand, with the opening, from which the sound issues, turned upward. In addition to the month of Ellul and New Year, the Shofar is sounded at the close of the Day of Atonement. Among the Portuguese Jews it is then sounded

[2] Szold-Jastrow Ritual.

four times, and among others but once. And finally it is sounded on the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles, at each of the seven circuits made around the synagogue.

One word more about the Jewish New Year. On New Year, as well as on the subsequent holy day, the worshippers, in the most conservative synagogues, wear their burial shrouds as an incentive to sincere repentance, for it helps to remind people of their mortality, the uncertainty of life and the divine judgment.

In addition to fasting, the special confessions of guilt, and the petitions for forgiveness, there is but one peculiar ceremonial institution marking the observance of the Day of Atonement. The institution referred to consists of the kindling of a large wax taper by every member of the congregation near the bema of the synagogue or at the seats of worshippers in memory of departed dear ones. The taper is always large enough to burn the entire twenty-four hours of the fast. The reason for the kindling of the taper lies in the comparison the Bible makes between the soul of man, in the

immortality of which the Jew believes, and a lamp or light.

We shall now take up for consideration the Feast of Booths occurring on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, Tishri. It is observed for seven days, the first day alone being a holy convocation, while the remaining six days are half holidays. It is instituted in memory of the dwelling of the children of Israel in booths when they journeyed through the wilderness.[3] Being a harvest festival, the Feast of Booths is observed in the synagogue by songs of praise, the decoration of the synagogue with plants and fruits, more especially with the use of "the palm branch" "Lulab" and the "citron" "Ethrog." The preparation of the palm branch is based on the passage:

"And ye shall take unto you on the first day the fruit of the goodly tree, branches of palm trees, and boughs of thick leaved trees, and willows of the brook, and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days."[4]

The palm branch is decorated at the lower

[3] Lev. 23: 43.
[4] Lev. 23: 40.

part with myrtle and willow branches, attached to the palm branch by means of leaves of the palm tree. When the palm branch and citron are picked up the benediction recited is:

"Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us the use of the palm branch."

On the first day is added the benediction, in which God is thanked for having spared the worshipper to enjoy this season. Not only the precentor but many a layman is provided with a lulab and ethrog. The palm branch and the citron are lifted up in full view of the congregation during the rendition of psalms of praise and the prayer for God's redemption, which are recited while a circuit is made around the synagogue. On Sabbath the lulab is not taken up, as the carrying of it is regarded a form of work, desecrating the day. The Karaites do not give the lulab a place in the synagogal service, but believe that it is to be used in the building of the "Succah," Booth.

In some synagogues a booth is erected, similar to that met in the Jewish home. We shall not speak of the booth in this connection, as its

1 Palm Branch—*Lulav* 2 Receptacle (Silver) for Citron—*Ethrog*

discussion has its proper place among the ceremonial institutions, characterizing the Jewish home, to be discussed later.

The last day of the Feast of Booths is called "Hoshana Rabba," because on this day numerous petitions for the salvation of Israel are recited. During the intoning of these petitions, the worshippers make seven circuits around the auditorium of the synagogue. Among Portuguese Jews the Shofar is sounded on this day, as if to give those, who have not become thoroughly reconciled with God on the Atonement Day, a last opportunity of repentance before the final judgment of God is sealed. It is on the eve of this festival that a watch takes place, similar to the one held on the eve of the Feast of Weeks.

On "Shemini Atzereth," the Feast of Assembly, celebrated on the 22d day of the seventh month, Tishri, no special ceremonial institution, except the reading of the scroll of Ecclesiastes, marks the public service. However, the day following, the 23rd day of the seventh month, known as "Simchath Torah," "Feast of Rejoic-

ing Over the Law," is characterized by an elaborate institution. The feast is post-Biblical in origin and was not a fixed institution until the annual cycle of Pentateuchal reading from the scrolls was firmly established. As has been mentioned in the first chapter, the last section of Deuteronomy is read on this day from one scroll and the first section of Genesis from another. The recitations of the customary benedictions over the last sub-section, read from the first scroll, and over the first sub-section, read from the second, are prized as precious privileges and hence eagerly sought. The two persons, who obtain these privileges, often at the expense of rich offerings to the congregational treasury, are respectively titled "Chasan Torah," Bridegroom of the Law, and "Chasan Bereshith," Bridegroom of Genesis. In many congregations, where this day is still observed, these two Bridegrooms are wont to tender their worshippers a repast. On the Day of Rejoicing Over the Law special inducements are held out to the younger members of the congregation to participate actively in the public service.

Carrying flags with burning tapers, young boys will, on the eve of the day, join the procession in which all the scrolls owned by the congregation are carried around the auditorium of the synagogue. As the procession moves through the auditorium women throw nuts and raisins from the galleries on the men and boys marching below—tokens of the sweetness which the study of the law yields to man. While the scrolls are out of the ark, which should at no time be empty, a burning taper is put into it. In some communities, it is customary to call even young boys, who have not yet attained the age of religious majority, to the bema to recite the benedictions over one of the sub-sections of the Pentateuchal festive portion.

Beginning with the 25th day of the ninth month, Kislev, Jews celebrate for eight days "Chanukkah," Feast of Dedication, in commemoration of the defeat of Antiochus Epiphanes and the re-dedication of the Temple at Jerusalem by Judas Maccabeus (164 B. C. E.). It is called also "Feast of the Asmoneans." It is celebrated by kindling, on every evening of

the feast, beginning with the eve of the first day, wax tapers or lamps. On the eve of the first day one light is kindled. The number of lights steadily increases until the eighth day is reached, the number always corresponding to the ordinal number of the day celebrated. A fresh taper daily is used for the kindling of the lights and bears the name "Shammash," servant. In the Talmud there is a discussion as to whether the number of lights should increase or decrease from day to day. Hillel believes in the increase and Shammai in the decrease. For the holding of the tapers every congregation possesses a candelabrum made either of burnished brass or silver. The ceremony of kindling lights is based on a tradition, which tells, that, when the Temple was cleansed of all debris by Judas Maccabeus, he found a cruse of oil, hermetically closed with the high priest's seal, the size of which indicated that there would be sufficient oil in it to last merely one day, whereas it miraculously lasted for eight days. On lighting the Chanukkah lights the following benedictions are recited:

"Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments and has commanded us to kindle the lights of Chanukkah."

"Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who wrought miracles for our fathers in days of old at this season."

On the first night a third benediction, consisting of thanks to God for having spared the worshipper in health and life, is added.

After the lighting of the tapers or lamps, a hymn of praise is sung, dwelling upon the frequent intercession of God's help in the time of Israel's early oppression.

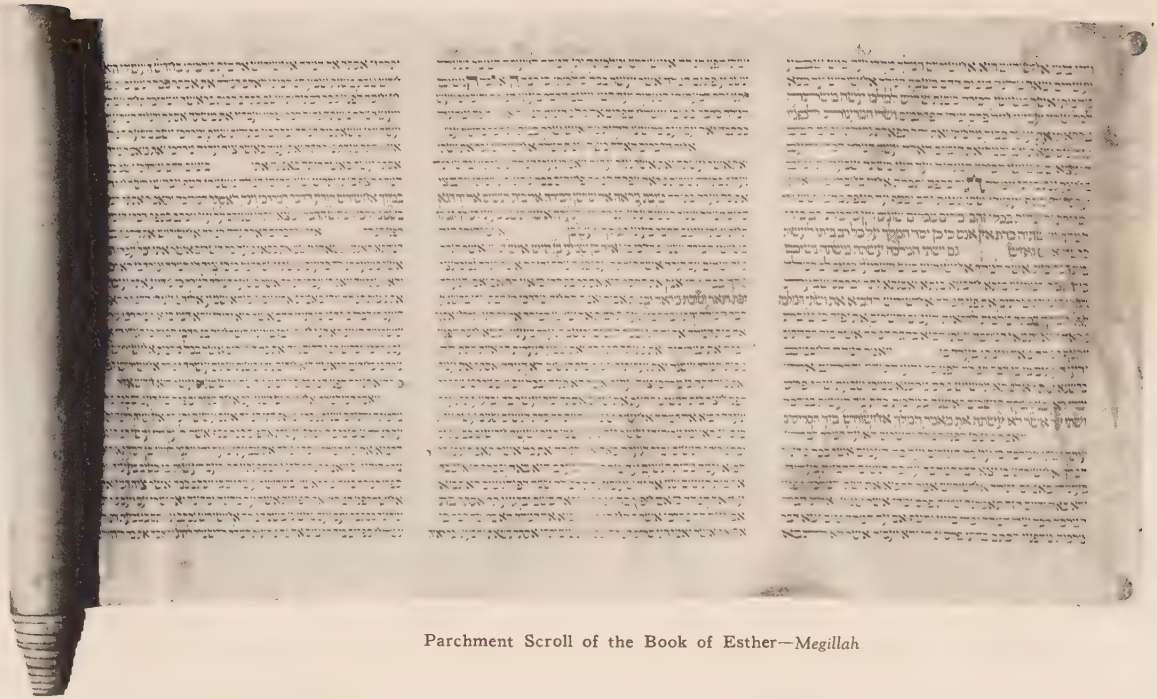
Purim, rendered according to Biblical etymology "Feast of Lots," and celebrated on the 14th day of the twelfth month, Adar, and in case of leap year on the 14th day of the thirteenth month, has its public service in the synagogue marked by the reading of the book of Esther both on the eve and morning of the holiday.

The book of Esther is not read on this occasion from an ordinary text of the Old Testament, but from a parchment scroll, which is called "Megillah," the scroll.

The Megillah must be carefully written on the skin of a clean animal, by a Jewish Scribe, with good ink, and not printed, although printed copies are in existence and are used by members of the congregation, while following the reading of the precentor, who invariably has before him a parchment scroll. The names of the Sons of Haman must be written on separate lines, one below the other.

The book of Esther is chanted in a melody unlike that characterizing the reading of the scrolls of the law or the selections from the prophets. The recitation of Esther by heart is forbidden, however well acquainted the precentor may be with the book. He is compelled to have the text before him. While everybody is in duty bound to read the book of Esther for himself, persons not understanding Hebrew are considered as having performed their obligation, if they listen to its reading. Before the reading of the book of Esther, these blessings are recited:

"Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us by His command-



Parchment Scroll of the Book of Esther—*Megillah*

ments, and has commanded us to read the Megillah."

"Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has wrought miracles for our fathers in days of old."

On the eve of Purim every worshipper puts his contribution toward charity into a plate or basket placed at the entrance of the synagogue for collection of gifts. In some communities the money thus procured is given to the precentor as a remuneration for his reading of the Megillah. Both Chanukkah and Purim are in many synagogues made festivals for young people. They are, therefore, celebrated by the presentation of plays dealing with the facts of the Chanukkah and Purim stories.

Such are in the main the ceremonial institutions, which we note during the public devotion in the synagogue on the different occasions of the year.

CHAPTER VI

Customs in the Home

The Jewish home is permeated by a marked religious atmosphere. The injunction to speak, when sitting in one's house, of the things God commanded has been put into execution almost literally. From the time the Jew takes possession of a house which he expects to make his residence, one ceremonial institution after another is made to declare the religion of the occupants. In compliance with the Biblical passage, "Thou shalt write them (the words of the law) upon the door posts of thy house and upon thy gates,"[1] we, as a rule, find, upon the upper part of the right post of doors leading into the residence of a Jew, and of doors leading into every room of such residence, a small wooden, glass, or metal tube varying from two

[1] Deut. 6: 9.

to six inches in length. This tube or case is known by the name "Mezuzah," literally meaning "door post," and secondarily signifying object fixed to door post. It is always attached in a slanting position. The tube or case contains a small parchment scroll, made of the skin of a clean animal. The rules governing the writing of the paragraphs in the Mezuzah are the same as those to be observed in the writing of the scrolls and phylacteries. The passages contained in the Mezuzah are:

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

And thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

And these words which I command thee, this day shall be in thy heart.

And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thy house, when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house and upon thy gates." [2]

The second section reads:

[2] Deut. 6: 4-9.

"And it shall come to pass if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments, which I command you this day, to love the Lord, your God, and to serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul,

That I will give you the rain of your land in its due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn and thy wine and thine oil.

And I will send grass in thy field for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be satisfied.

Take heed that your heart be not deceived and ye turn aside and serve other gods, and worship them:

And then the Lord's wrath be kindled against you and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain and that the land yield not her fruit, and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the Lord giveth you.

Therefore shall ye lay up these, my words, in your heart, and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.

And ye shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thy house, when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down and when thou risest up.

And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house and upon thy gates." [3]

After the parchment has been finished, it is rolled up and put into the tube or case, which has a small opening, thus revealing the word

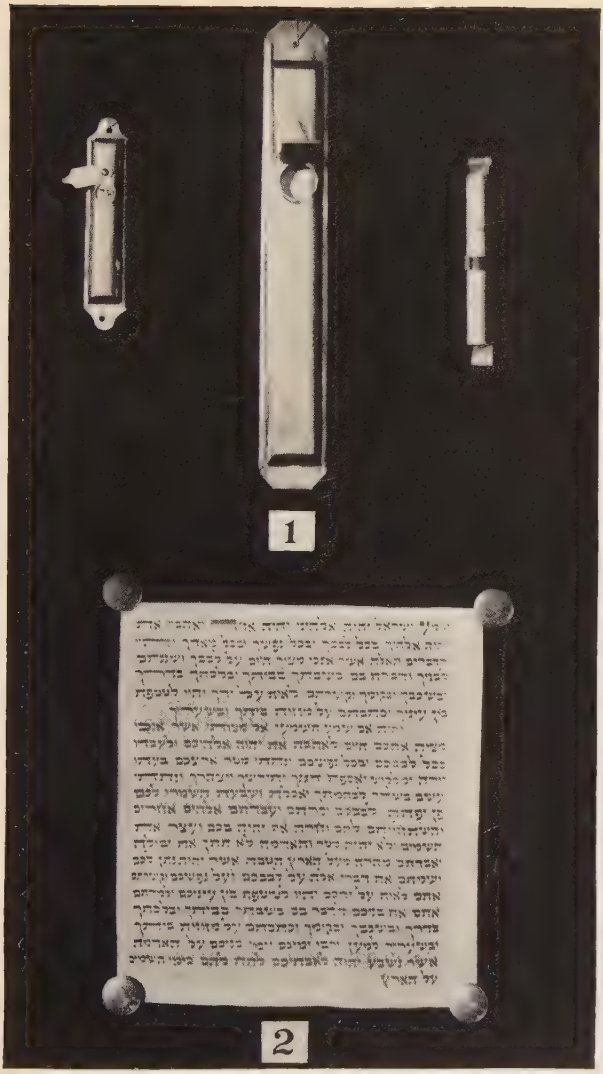
[3] Deut. 11: 13-20.

שדי "Almighty," written on the back of the parchment.

The Mezuzah must be examined periodically in order to ascertain whether it is in good condition. If the ink has faded the Mezuzah should be replaced by another. When the Mezuzah is attached to the door post a benediction is recited, praising God for having enjoined the law with reference to this institution.

A number of Jews, upon passing through a gate-way adorned with a Mezuzah, are in the habit of touching the Mezuzah with the hand and then kissing the hand, as a mark of respect. In the east there are Jewish homes which have Mezuzoth containing the whole decalogue. A similar custom obtains among Mohammedans who inscribe their doors and windows with passages from the Koran.

The object of the Mezuzah is to remind Jews of the need of sanctifying the home by means of religious teachings, and of keeping the home unpolluted from all evil. The Mezuzah is undoubtedly an amulet and forcibly recalls the protecting charm possessed by the door posts



1 Mezuzoth

2 Mezuzah Scroll

of the ancient Israelites in Egypt, as we read:

"And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin, and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until morning, for the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He seeth the blood upon the lintel and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you." [4]

The claim that the Mezuzah is an amulet protecting the occupants of the home against harm from evil spirits, is justified by the belief in the power of amulets among Jews, a great number of whom are known to wear them on their persons. The amulet, "Kamea," used among Jews and worn by them on their persons for purposes of protection against all sorts of misfortune, more especially sickness, varies in design. A popular form is a piece of parchment with a Hebrew inscription. Another form is an ornament in the shape of a heart made of some metal with "Shaddai," Almighty, inscribed on one side and the shield of David engraved on

[4] Ex. 12: 22-23.

the reverse side. In the collection of objects of Jewish ceremonial in the National Museum at Washington there are, in addition to the amulets of the character already given, a medallion, a silver medal, a silver coin, and two silver rings, used for this purpose. The importance attached to amulets may be recognized in the permission granted by the Shulchan Aruch to wear them on the Sabbath,[5] although it forbids the carrying of other portable things on the seventh day, owing to the fact, that carrying is considered a form of labor. Israel Abrahams tells, that during the Middle Ages betrothal rings inscribed with the words "Mazal Tob," good luck, were supposed to protect the bride against the proverbial "evil eye," while in more recent times seal rings were engraved for a similar purpose with the name of God.[6]

At this point it should not be overlooked that Abraham Ibn Ezra denounced amulets, together with all other forms of superstition.

[5] Orach Chayim 301.
[6] "Jewish Life in the Middle Ages," p. 182.

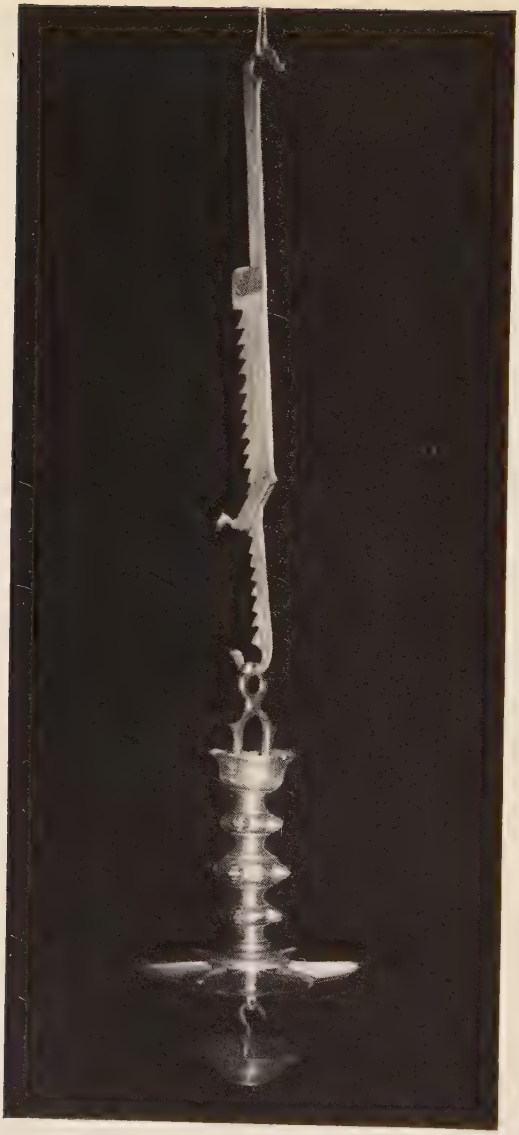
Though different in purpose from the Mezuzah, an object found in most Jewish homes should here be mentioned. It is the so-called "Mizrach." It is made either of paper, cardboard, silk or velvet, and handsomely embroidered. Some households own "Mizrachs" which are masterpieces of art. The Mizrach gets its name, which means East, from the object it serves. When framed, it is usually suspended on the eastern wall of the living room of the house, in order to indicate the East, the direction, in which occupants of the house turn when engaged in prayer. The verse usually found on the top of the Mizrach is:

"From the rising of the sun unto its setting the name of the Lord is praised." [7]

After the Jewish home is provided with Mezuzoth and the family takes possession of its home, the home is formally dedicated with religious ceremony, consisting of the recitation of passages from the Biblical and Talmudical writings. The Biblical portions selected for this

[7] Ps. 113: 3.

occasion are Psalms 30; 15; 101; 121; 127; 128; and 119, verses 9-16, 153-160, 81-88, 33-40 in the order here given. For the purpose of formal dedication some one learned in the law is usually engaged to recite the selections above indicated.



Sabbath Lamp

CHAPTER VII

Sabbath in the Home

Although attendance at synagogue is expected from Jews, on the ground that it has a tendency to strengthen the Jewish consciousness and solidarity, there are occasions when the home is made the scene of divine services. These occasions are the mornings and evenings of the week of mourning, "Shibah," following the death of some near relative (during which time the mourner is expected to abstain from the pursuit of his vocation); the anniversaries of the death of a relative; and wedding ceremonies (institutions, the details of which will be explained in subsequent chapters).

As in the discussion of the ceremonial institutions in vogue in the synagogue proper, we followed the holy seasons in their Jewish calendar order, so we shall follow them in describing the institutions practiced in the home.

Before proceeding to them we shall take up the Sabbath.

The Sabbath among Jews is a day of joy, and the ceremonial institutions marking it are, therefore, all expressive of its joyous character. While the head of the family is at the synagogue, welcoming in the public devotion the day of rest, the wife and mother, or in the case of her absence, the oldest female member of the home, covers the table in the dining room with a white cloth and places upon it two candlesticks, each of which contains a wax or tallow taper, kindled by her just before sundown, while reciting the benediction:

"Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has commanded us to kindle the Sabbath lights."

On the eve of festivals, when the same ceremony is observed, the word "festival" is substituted for the word "Sabbath" in the benediction.

The candlesticks are either of burnished brass or silver. In some instances a candelabrum is used in place of the candlesticks, and,

Candlesticks and Candelabra—*Menoroth*

in a number of cases, homes are provided with Sabbath lamps, supplied with seven brackets for lights, and suspended from the ceiling of the living room.

In addition to the Sabbath lights, two loaves of bread, called "Berches" a Jewish corruption of the Hebrew "Berachoth" (blessings) because symbols of God's bounty, the double portion of manna with which ancient Israel in the desert of Sinai was provided on Friday,[1] are placed on the table directly in front of the seat occupied by the head of the family during the evening meal. These "Berches" are usually baked at the home by the housewife, who is in duty bound to take from the dough a "Challah" (corresponding to the first part of the dough to be given to the priest),[2] and to place it into the stove to be burnt. This act, too, is accompanied by a benediction, in which God is blessed for commanding the separation of the Challah.

When the husband and father returns from the synagogue, his children gather about him,

[1] Ex. 16: 22.
[2] Numb. 15: 17-21.

according to age, and he, placing his hands on their heads, invokes upon them a benediction. In the case of boys he pronounces the words, "May God make thee like Ephraim and Manasseh," and in the case of the girls, "May God make thee like Sarah, Rebeccah, Rachel and Leah," concluding in both cases with the threefold priestly benediction, "The Lord bless thee and preserve thee; the Lord make his countenance to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance toward thee and give thee peace."

Then in honor of the female head of the house, the father recites Proverbs 31: 10-31, in which the qualities of the virtuous woman are extolled. Washing his hands (a custom enjoined before every service, especially before the meal about to be served, because the table corresponds to the altar which demands the purity of the priest), the husband proceeds to the sanctification of the Sabbath, the Kiddush, in the manner in which this ceremony took place in the synagogue and as described in a previous chapter. When the blessing has been recited

over the wine, the goblet is passed to every member of the family, according to age, each one of whom takes from it a sip. Here follows the benediction over the loaves of bread which reads:

"Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who brings bread out of the earth."

One of the loaves is cut and each person at the table receives a small piece called the "Motzie," signifying literally "he that brings forth" and secondarily "that which God brings forth" and is applied to any cut off part of the loaf over which a blessing has been pronounced. After supper follow the grace after meals, and hymns of praise which are known as "Zemiroth" (psalms or hymns of praise).

The lights in many Jewish homes are extinguished and the fires raked by a non-Jew, engaged for this purpose, in as much, as, by Rabbinical interpretation of a Scriptural passage Jews are forbidden to touch fire in any form on the Sabbath day.[3]

[3] Ex. 35: 3.

The same ceremony of breaking bread and blessing the wine is observed on the eve of holidays with slight modification always suggested by the peculiar character of the day celebrated. At the noon meal of the Sabbath and holidays the blessing is everywhere recited over loaves of bread and only in some places places also over wine. The loaves, until cut, are always covered by an embroidered cloth reserved for this purpose. The noon meal also is followed by songs of praise, as is the meal on the eve of the previous day. The "Habdalah" (distinction), celebrated in the home at the close of the Sabbath, differs somewhat from its observance in the public devotion of the synagogue. The male members of the family drink the wine, while all members of the family inhale the fragrance of the spices. In place of wine, if wine cannot be procured, beer or milk may be used. If there is no male head to the family, mothers sanctify, with Kiddush, and close, with Habdalah, the Sabbath in the home.

CHAPTER VIII

The Festivals in the Home

The holiday marked by elaborate ceremonial institutions in the home is Passover. Preparations are made for putting the home into festive attire long before the arrival of the sacred season. For weeks sometimes housewives are busy removing the leaven out of the various apartments of their dwellings. When the house has been thoroughly cleansed the head of the family will, on the eve of the day preceding Passover, make a search in his house for leaven, gathering up everything of this kind and blessing God for having enjoined this custom as a religious duty. He then states, that all the leaven which has escaped his notice shall not be accounted as such but as the dust of the earth. About ten o'clock on the following day all the leaven gathered is burnt. During the afternoon the table is set for the Seder, "order,"

"service," which takes place upon the return of the male members of the family from the public devotion in the synagogue. The Seder is held in memory of Israel's exode from Egypt. The table is set as follows:

At the place immediately in front of the seat of him, who is to conduct the service, a dish is placed, on which are put three unleavened cakes (Matzoth), each one of which is covered separately. On the top of them are put a roasted egg, a roasted shank bone, the "Charoseth" (a mixture of scraped apples, almonds and wine), "Maror" (bitter herbs, parsley and salt water). That which is used first is of course placed nearest to the leader of the service. Every one of these articles is emblematic of some special historical idea. The bitter herbs, usually consisting of horseradish, stand, on account of their pungent taste, for the hard work of the Israelites in Egypt. The Charoseth, on account of its brown color, is representative of the clay, out of which Israelites make bricks. The shank bone is the memorial of the paschal lamb. And the use of the egg, a ceremonial object only a

couple of centuries old and borrowed from Christians, is symbolical of the sacrifice brought on each day of the festival when the Temple was in existence.

During the service every participant drinks four cups of wine especially prepared for Passover. These four cups correspond to the four expressions of redemption used in the Bible, in connection with the story of Israel's liberation. The four expressions are הוצאתי "I have brought forth," גאלתי "I have redeemed," הצלתי "I have delivered," לקחתי "I have taken." [1]

In the great majority of families, the wine for this occasion is made of raisins. During the reading of the service the participants are to recline, expressive of the comparative freedom and ease Jews enjoyed since their ancestors' slavery. The Passover is a family reunion and often brings together members of the same family living great distances apart. The dish containing the necessary articles is usually one designed for the Seder purpose. It

[1] Ex. 6: 6-7.

is made either of earthenware or metal, and richly decorated. The cups of wine are silver, provided the means of the family will allow the purchase of such. It should be stated here that these utensils, as well as all others used during the Passover week, are never used at any other time of the year. When Passover has passed, the utensils are carefully stored away in order to keep them from all contact with either anything leaven or with the dishes used for leavened food.

The Seder service proceeds in the following order: The sanctification of the day by Kiddush; the washing of the hands; the eating of the parsley; the breaking of the middle cake in the dish (a part of which is called "Afikomen," distributed by some among the family after the meal and by others kept until the following year and burnt with the leaven on the eve of the subsequent Passover). Here follows an invitation to all who are needy to come and participate in the service. The stories of Israel's slavery, its exode from Egypt, and its development as a nation are told. Interspersed with

Kiddush Cup (Silver)

Passover Kiddush Goblet (Silver)

these narratives are comments by the Rabbis of the early Christian centuries and songs of praise to God. Then follow in the order here given the eating of the bitter herb, the serving of the evening meal, grace, psalms, songs, and special prayers.

The next festival observed in the home by special ceremonial is New Year. The ceremonial customary then is nothing more than the exchange of the compliments of the season. On this occasion relatives and friends visit one another and meet with the greeting, "Shanah Tobah," a Happy New Year, to which the person addressed responds, גם אתה or גם את lit. "also you," meaning "the same to you." If people find it impossible to see one another in person on this day, they exchange cards, expressing their good wishes with the inscription: לשנה טובה תכתב "May you be inscribed for a good year," with the phrase, "in the book of life" understood. These cards differ both in design and elaborateness. In some communities it is customary to eat honey with bread on the eve of the New Year, expressive of the wish

that, as the bread is sweet, so may the experiences during the year to come be only the most pleasant.

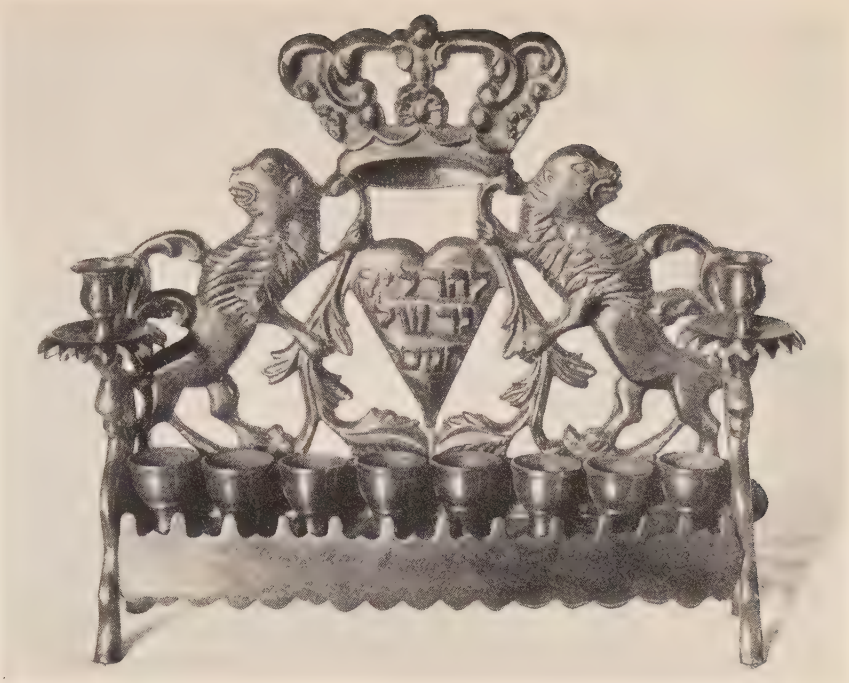
A feast observed in the home by an interesting institution is the Feast of Tabernacles, celebrated, as has been stated in one of the preceding chapters, in commemoration of the fact, that the Israelites dwelt in booths, while wandering through the wilderness. Because Leviticus 23: 43 commands, "In booths shall ye dwell," booths are erected for this festival in either the yard or on the roofs of Jewish homes. The booth has three sides of wood, while the fourth side or entrance is covered by a curtain. The roof consists of leaves and branches, closely put together, so that the sun may not annoy the family dining and sitting in the booth during the entire week of the festival. Everything which does not grow on the earth is unfit as material for the roof. The sides are usually hung with beautiful draperies, while the roof is hung with different kinds of fruit. The draperies are often old curtains of the ark of the synagogue. The work of construction begins

immediately after the Day of Atonement. The height of the booth dare not exceed twenty cubits, the measurement fixed by Rabbinical law. Nor is a booth allowed to be narrower than the given size of four cubits. Although it is a duty to spend one's time in the booth during this holiday, some people going even so far as to sleep in it, the sick are exempt from this obligation. In case of rain, people need not remain in the booth, although the Kiddush (sanctification) and the Motzie (breaking of bread), on the first night must take place in it, despite inclement weather.

Chanukkah, the Feast of Dedication, observed in memory of the victories of Judas Maccabeus over the Syrians, is celebrated in the home, as in the synagogue, by the kindling of wax tapers or oil lamps by all male members of the family. In many instances even women and girls perform this religious duty. The candelabra used for this purpose are not always of costly character. They are improvised at times out of wood or even egg shells. Because made a feast for children, owing to the youth

of the hero of the Chanukkah story, parents are in the habit of delighting the hearts of the little ones with presents of all kinds, as Christians are wont to do on Christmas. A favorite sport on this feast among Jews during the Middle Ages, mentioned by Israel Abrahams, was the propounding of arithmetical puzzles.[2] Card playing is on this feast not only permitted, but actually endorsed by Jewish tradition as a means of amusement. A well-known game of chance is that played with the Trendel (a top), made either of wood or metal. According to some the word "trendel" is a Judaized term from the German "Draehen," to turn, and according to others from "Trändel," to hesitate. Trendel, according to the latter derivation, would be the object, hesitating to decide upon what side to fall. The body of the top is a cube, on each of the lateral sides of which is found a Hebrew letter. The four Hebrew letters are נ׳ג׳ה׳ש the initials of the words constituting the sentence נס גדול היה שם "a great

[2] "Jewish Life in the Middle Ages," p. 385.



Chanukkah Lamp—*Menorah*

miracle happened there." In playing with the Trendel, each of the different persons engaged in the game puts a coin or nut into a common pot. The Trendel is spun, and the letter, which comes to view, as the Trendel falls, indicates the gain or loss of the player. The letters are used as initials of German words. נ stands for "N," of "Nichts," and indicates that the player takes nothing out of the pot. The ג stands for "G," of "Ganz," and indicates that the whole pot belongs to the player. ה stands for "H," of "Halb," and indicates that the player gets half of the pot. ש stands for "St," of "Stellen," and indicates that the player must put a fixed fine into the pot. This game is not Jewish in origin. Nor do all Jews play it. It is confined to only German-speaking Jews. Stewart Culin of the University of Pennsylvania, has treated it among other games played by different nations.

Purim is celebrated in the home by the interchange of presents between different families, known as "Shloach Manoth," the sending

of gifts.[3] The poor especially are remembered with a goodly portion on this occasion. On the eve of the festival the table in many a home is set with sweets for visitors, more especially masquers, who in every community go from home to home in large numbers and make carnival on this holiday. On Purim, too, Jews freely indulge in card-playing. These are in the main the institutions practiced in the Jewish home worthy of note.

The following chapters will lead us into a description of certain general religious customs and rites in vogue among Jews without special reference to any particular plan for their observance.

[3] Esther 9: 22.

CHAPTER IX

Circumcision and Redemption of the First Born

In treating of the ceremonial institutions which are not confined either to the synagogue as such or to the Jewish home, let us discuss them in the order, in which the Jew encounters and experiences them in the course of his life.

The first institution claiming our attention is the hoary rite of circumcision. It consists, as the etymology of the English term implies, of the removal of the foreskin from the male organ by means of cutting. Its Hebrew equivalent is "Milah." There is no Jewish institution which has been preserved more faithfully and is violated less. In whatever respect a Jew may prove lax, he will rarely fail to perform the circumcision through the proper agent appointed for this purpose, when a son is born to him. The institution has met with general

conformity, because of the Biblical command enjoined upon Abraham, and later upon the people of Israel. It is Abraham concerning whom it is said:

"And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant, therefore, thou and thy seed after thee in their generations.

This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised.

And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations. He that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger which is not of thy seed.

He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised; and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant." [1]

The children of Israel are told:

"And in the eighth day the flesh of his (man child's) foreskin shall be circumcised." [2]

[1] Gen. 17:9-14.
[2] Gen. 12:3.

Owing to the fact, that circumcision was the sign of God's adoption by Abraham, it is known as ברית אברהם "The Abrahamitic covenant."

According to Jewish tradition, it is the duty of every father to circumcise his son. Should the father neglect his responsibility, the religious authorities look to its execution. And in the event that a male's circumcision is overlooked by those in authority in the congregation, said male, when grown, is obligated to provide for his own circumcision. One willing to remain uncircumcised is punished with the penalty of כרת "cutting off" from the congregation of God.

Originally every father was expected to circumcise his child, but in the course of time the office of professional operator, "Mohel,"—circumciser—was created. At the present time the service is not infrequently delegated to a graduate physician, as circumcision is justly regarded a surgical operation.

The circumcision must take place on the eighth day after the child's birth and not earlier than sunrise. If a circumcision has for

some cause or other been performed at night, blood, known as blood of the covenant, must be drawn by incision from the male organ of the child during the following day. In the case of weak children the circumcision is postponed until they are strong enough to undergo the operation. A sick child, for example, one suffering from fever, is not circumcised until seven days after its recovery. A child suffering from some local ailment, like sore eyes, is circumcised immediately after its recovery. The child born without foreskin has simply the drop of blood, constituting the blood of the covenant, taken from him by incision. The utmost precaution is always exercised not to endanger a child's life by circumcision. If the blood does not circulate properly in a child, or, if two children of the same family have died as a result of their circumcision, the circumcision must be postponed. If a child dies before the eighth day, its circumcision should, according to the Shulchan Aruch, take place at the cemetery before burial, but without the recitation of the usual formula, although the dead child

is given a name. The custom of circumcising dead children is not general.

Circumcision may take place on Sabbaths. It may be performed in the home, or even in the synagogue. The synagogue is not often selected. The operation may be performed by means of any sharp instrument, either a lancet or scissors. A lancet is most generally employed.

The manner of the operation is as follows: The foreskin is stretched forward and held tight by some support, so that it does not slip back on the organ. It is then cut off close to the support and thrown into sand, because the promise was given to Abraham that his posterity would be as numerous as the grains of sand upon the seashore. Some wine is then sprinkled on the wound and on the face of the child in order to revive the child from weakness, consequent upon the loss of blood. The remaining skin of the organ is then dressed, so that the head of the organ remains altogether exposed, an act termed "Periah," uncovering, without which the circumcision is null and void.

Thereupon the operator takes some wine into his mouth and sucks the blood out of the wound, an act known as "Mezizah," and performed to prevent inflammation. Some healing powder is put on the wound, and the organ is bandaged. The sucking of the blood has been abandoned in communities where practicing physicians perform the operation, and, in its place, antiseptics are used, because children have been by the traditional procedure known to become inoculated with the germs of disease.

The night preceding the circumcision is often spent at the home of the child in the recitation of Psalms and Talmudical passages by those who expect to attend the acceptance of the boy into the Abrahamitic covenant.

The most important person next to the operator at the circumcision is the "Sandek," Godfather, or "Ba'al Berith." He holds the child while the circumcision is performed. The service accompanying the operation is the following:

As the child is brought into the room where

the circumcision takes place, the company to witness the operation exclaims: "Blessed be he who comes in the name of God."

The father of the child then says:

"Behold I am prepared to perform the commandatory precept which the Creator, praised be He, enjoined upon us, namely, to circumcise my son, as it is written in the law. 'And at the age of 8 days every male throughout your generations should be circumcised.'"

The operator places the child, then, upon a chair symbolical of the throne of Elijah, Elijah being the angel of the covenant, according to the prophet Malachi, and says, "Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me." [3]

The operator thereupon recites:

"This is the throne of Elijah—may he be remembered for good. For Thy salvation, O Lord, I have waited. For Thy salvation, O Lord, I have hoped. Thy commandments I have obeyed. For Thy salvation, O Lord, I have hoped. I rejoice because of Thy word, as one who finds abundant booty. Unbounded peace comes to those, who cherish Thy law and obstacles never come into their path. Happy he,

[3] Mal. 3:23.

whom Thou choosest and whom Thou causest to approach, that he may dwell in Thy courts."

After this introduction the company responds:

"Let us be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, Thy holy temple."

The god-father, who is seated upon a chair, now receives the child and holds it on his knees, while the operator cuts the foreskin and says:

"Praised art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with his commandments and enjoined upon us the circumcision."

The circumcision having been finished the father intones:

"Praised art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with his commandments, and commanded us to cause our sons to enter the covenant of our Father Abraham."

To this benediction the company responds:

"As he (the boy) has entered the covenant, so may he be permitted to enter the study of the law, the marriage state and the practice of good deeds."

Then the operator picks up a goblet of wine and says:

"Praised art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

"Praised art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who from the womb sanctified the beloved (Isaac), who set a statute in his flesh and who sealed his off-spring with the sign of the holy covenant, therefore, with this reward. Oh, our living God, our Portion, our Rock, command the deliverance of the dearly beloved of our flesh from destruction for the sake of the covenant, Thou hast put on our flesh. Praised art Thou, O Lord, Former of the covenant.

Our God, and God of our Fathers, preserve this child for his father and mother, and may he be called in Israel—(Here follows the Hebrew name of the child by which he is to be known). Let the father rejoice over him that came from his loins, and let his mother be glad because of the fruit of her womb, as it is written in scriptures: 'let thy father and thy mother rejoice and let her that gave thee birth, be glad.' And as it is said: 'And I passed by thee, and saw thee weltering in thy blood, and said unto thee: In thy blood live.' And it is furthermore said: 'He hath remembered His covenant forever, the word which he commanded for a thousand generations; the covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath unto Isaac, and which He confirmed unto Jacob for a statute, to Israel for an everlasting covenant.' And it is said: 'And Abraham circumcised his son, Isaac, when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.'

Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good. His loving kindness endures forever. May this child (here the name is again mentioned), become great; and as he has entered the covenant, so may he be permitted to enter the study of the law, the bond of marriage, and the practice of good deeds."

The god-father now drinks of the wine. A few drops are given to the infant. The goblet with the remainder is sent to the mother, so that she may partake of its contents. The circumcision always concludes with a feast, followed by grace appropriate to the occasion and recited by the operator.[4]

While speaking of the circumcision of Jewish children, the adoption of non-Jews as proselytes may be taken into consideration. The Shulchan Aruch holds that non-Jewish males, seeking religious fellowship with Israel and the privileges resulting therefrom, must be subjected to circumcision. If the non-Jew has already been circumcised for hygienic reasons, the drop of blood, known as the blood of the covenant, referred to several times before, must be drawn from his genital organ by means of incision. If, for some reason or other, like weakness or disease, the proselyte cannot be circumcised without dangerous consequences, he may be accepted by simply conforming to

[4] For rules governing the circumcision, vide Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah, 260, etc.

the two other conditions of admission, bathing and immersion. Attention should be called to the fact that at a meeting of American Reform Rabbis held in New York in 1892, the circumcision of proselytes was abolished as a condition of their admission into the Jewish faith.[5]

In this connection it may not be out of place to say a word on the attitude of Jews toward proselytes. It should be stated at the outset, that Judaism is not a proselytizing faith. Non-Jews are accepted only if they apply for Jewish fellowship of their own free will and accord. Every conversion presupposes not only instruction in the principles and ceremonial institutions of Judaism but also the dissuasion of the prospective convert from his step. He must be made acquainted with the sad lot of persecution which Israel endured; and, only, after the promise of willingness to share that lot with his newly adopted brethren can the convert hope to be accepted. In addition the pledge is exacted, that, all male children, born to the con-

[5] Vide "Year Book Central Conference of American Rabbis," 1892-1893.

vert after entrance into the marriage state with a born Jew or Jewess, will be permitted to conform to the demands of the Abrahamitic covenant;[6] and that all female children will be reared in the Jewish faith.

Since girls have no physical operation performed, the question naturally arises, when do they receive their names? It is customary for the father and mother of the female child to go to the synagogue about six weeks after the girl's birth. This visit is usually made on the Sabbath. The father is called to the bema to be one of the eight persons to recite the usual benedictions over a sub-section of the weekly portion read from the scrolls. In the course of special blessings, which the father asks the precentor to make, he delegates the precentor to dedicate one to his new-born daughter and to give to her the name, by which she is to be known ever after, and, to dedicate another blessing to his wife.

The attitude of the synagogue toward fe-

[6] Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah, 268-270.

male converts to Judaism is one of dissuasion, like its attitude toward males.

Another ceremony, to which male infants are subjected, is that known as the "Redemption," פדיון הבן if the male child happens to be the first born among the children of the family. The first born is always the first born of the mother. If a man marries a widow with children and a boy is the first fruit of the marriage, no Redemption is necessary. If the father is absent or sick at the time of a son's Redemption, the Redemption must be observed by the mother. This institution takes place on the thirty-first day after the child's birth. If the day for the Redemption happens to be a Sabbath or holiday, the ceremony is deferred until the next following day, because, being a transaction by means of coin, it is regarded a desecration of the Sabbath. The institution has its origin in the fact, that, in the tenth plague, which befell Egypt, and, in which the first born of every Egyptian home was killed, the first born of Israel was spared. The law is therefore laid down:

"Every firstling of an ass, thou shalt redeem with a lamb, and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck; and all the first born of man among thy children shalt thou redeem." [7]

In Numbers both the age and the cost of redemption are stipulated in the words:

"And those that are to be redeemed from a month old shalt thou redeem according to thine estimation, for the money of five sheckels, after the sheckel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerah." [8]

For the redemption of the child, the parents must go to one who is descended from the priestly family of Aaron. The reason that one of the descendants of Aaron officiates at this ceremony is, because, in the early days of Israel, the house of Aaron was selected in place of the first born of Israel to minister in the sanctuary. If the father of the child happens to be of the family of Aaron or of one of the less aristocratic Levitical clans, or, if the mother is the daughter of an Aaronite or Levite, the child need not be redeemed. The amount of redemption money to be given to the priestly descendant is always the equivalent of five sheckels—the equivalent

[7] Ex. 13:13.
[8] Numb. 18:16.

of $2.50 in our currency. The money may be given in the form of a substitute, if more agreeable or convenient. Should the father or mother neglect the ceremony of redemption, the child, when old, must of his own accord subject himself to it.

The service proceeds as follows: The father presents his child to the priest or Aaronite, and says:

"This my first born, is the first born of his mother; and the Holy One, Blessed be He, has commanded to redeem him as it is said: 'And those that are to be redeemed of them from a month old, shalt thau redeem, according to thine estimation, for the money of five sheckels, after the sheckels of the sanctuary, the sheckel being twenty gerahs.' And it is furthermore said: Sanctify unto me all the first born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast; it is mine."

The father, then handing to the Aaronite the equivalent of five sheckels, is asked by him:

"What do you prefer? To give me thy first born son, the first born of his mother, or to redeem him for five selahs, which thou art by law obliged to give?"

The father answers:

"I prefer to redeem my son. Here is the value of his redemption, which I am by law obliged to give."

After the redemption money has been accepted and the child has been returned to the father, the father says:

"Praised be Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us by his commandments and enjoined upon us the redemption of the son.

"Praised be Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has kept us alive, preserved us and permitted us to reach this season."

Holding the redemption money over the head of the child, the Aaronite declares:

"This is instead of that. This is in exchange of that. This is in remission of that. May it be the will of God, that as this child has entered the period of redemption, the child may be spared to enter the study of the law, the marriage state, and the practice of good deeds. Amen."

The Aaronite then places his hand upon the head of the child and says:

"May God make thee like Ephraim and Manasseh. May the Lord bless thee and preserve thee. May the Lord let His countenance shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee. May the Lord lift up His countenance toward thee and give thee peace. The Lord is thy keeper. The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. For length of days and years of life, and peace they shall add to thee. The Lord shall guard thee against all evil. He will guard thy life. Amen."

After the redemption there is a feast similar to the one following the circumcision.

Like other ancient institutions the Redemption of the First Born has fallen into growing disuse.

Here end the ceremonials of infancy.

CHAPTER X

Bar Mitzvah

The thirteenth birthday of the Jewish boy is one of the most important events of his life. He is then considered as having attained his religious majority. The event is usually celebrated by him both in the synagogue and home. Before, however, this is done, he is obliged to make elaborate educational preparation. Long before the advent of the important day, he is sent by his father to a teacher, who instructs him in the whole section or in one of the subsections of the weekly Pentateuchal portion read on the Sabbath following his thirteenth birthday, according to the Jewish calendar, in order to enable him to read the unpointed text of his section from the scrolls during the public services. In addition to the Pentateuchal section the boy is also taught the accompanying prophetical portion. While in some communi-

ties boys are permitted to read their parts of the Scriptures without the traditional melody, in the great majority of communities the reading with the melody (trope, or neginah) is not only expected, but actually demanded. During this period of instruction, the boy is furthermore taught how to lay the phylacteries, which becomes a daily duty to be performed by him already three months before the thirteenth anniversary of his birth. When the day in question arrives, he is regarded a "Bar Mitzvah," a son of the commandment, by which is understood, a Jew expected to perform the precepts of the religion and guilty of their violation. According to tradition, the father, who is in duty bound to provide for the proper training of his son, is responsible for the son's every failure to comply in childhood with the laws of God. When, therefore, the son becomes a "Bar Mitzvah" the father thanks God for having freed him from further responsibility for laws transgressed by his son. The father then recites the benediction: "Praised be He (that is, God) Who has

freed me from being responsible for this young man's conduct."

ברוך שפטרני מעונשו של זה

When the boy comes to the synagogue on the Sabbath of his Bar Mitzvah, he is called to the bema. There he sings the several subsections for others, who recite the traditional benedictions, usually saying the benedictions himself over the last and eighth subsection, called, as will be remembered, "Maftir," the concluding portion. The Bar Mitzvah then follows with the prophetical portion. In some instances boys deliver addresses in the hearing of the assembled worshippers. In these are set forth the duties and benefits of the Jew. Upon returning from the public devotion, the mid-day meal is made a family feast, and, during the course of the same, the "Bar Mitzvah" delivers a speech, accentuating the thanks he owes his parents and relatives for the love and care enjoyed at their hands. On this occasion the boy is the recipient of gifts from relatives and friends.

The reason assigned for the age at which a

boy becomes a "Bar Mitzvah" is a statement made in the Mishnah to this effect:

"At five one must begin the study of the Bible, at ten that of the Mishnah, and at thirteen one must assume the commandments, etc." [1]

Whether this is the real reason for the foundation of the institution is questionable. We are inclined to believe, that thirteen was fixed as the age of the Jew's religious majority because in the East boys attain their physical maturity about this time. As a religious institution to be celebrated according to the manner described, it is no doubt the result of Christian influences [2] and corresponds to the rite of Confirmation in the Church. Its existence in the synagogue cannot be traced further back than the fourteenth century.[3]

Girls are not subjected to this ceremony, as they cannot be expected to perform religious obligations, which have to be executed at a

[1] Aboth 5:24.

[2] Dembitz, "Services in Synagogue and Home," p. 263.

[3] "Jewish Life in the Middle Ages," p. 32; Loew, "Lebensalter," p. 210.

definite time (a point dwelt upon in a previous chapter).

The Bar Mitzvah ceremony, in the elaborateness given to it in previous centuries, has fallen into disuse in many communities. With the ever-lessening attention paid by Jews to the study of Hebrew, a boy, who becomes a Bar Mitzvah, frequently does no more than recite the benedictions over a subsection of the law read to him by the precentor of the synagogue. In those communities where the Bar Mitzvah ceremony has either disappeared altogether or has been modified as stated, an institution known as Confirmation, to which both boys and girls are admitted, takes the place of the Bar Mitzvah. It may be celebrated at any time. In America "Shabuoth," Feast of Weeks, is generally selected, because of the existing tradition, that on the sixth day of Sivan, the third month, the law was given to Israel at Mt. Sinai. This time is, therefore, best suited to impress on Confirmants their religious responsibility. The age of Confirmation is about the same as that of the Bar Mitzvah, although an effort is

now being made to raise the age of Confirmation, on account of the need of a more pronounced mental maturity for the proper comprehension of the subjects taught classes prepared for this ceremony. Confirmation was first introduced into the synagogue at Cassel, Westphalia, in 1810.

CHAPTER XI

Marriage

The religious ceremony following that of Bar Mitzvah or Confirmation, in the life of the Jew, is that of marriage. The age of marriage differs greatly. In some sections Jews marry earlier than in others. The practice is regulated for the most part by the custom in vogue among non-Jews. Israel Abrahams tells, that "the early age at which marriages occur must have been partly responsible for the chastity of the Jews in the middle ages." [1] Since the Mishnah fixes the eighteenth year of one's life as the age of marriage,[2] a man unmarried after this time is, in many communities, regarded as not having conformed with inviolable tradition. The Shulchan Aruch states: "Every Jewish man should marry at eighteen,

[1] "Jewish Life in the Middle Ages," p. 90.
[2] Aboth 5:24.

and he who marries earlier is more meritorious. No one, however, should marry earlier than thirteen years of age." [3]

In the selection of a spouse Jews and Jewesses must be cautious not to choose any one with whom wedlock is forbidden on account of consanguinity, affinity, chastity, or on religious grounds. The marriages forbidden on account of consanguinity and affinity are those stipulated in or based upon Leviticus 18:11-21, and there regarded as incest. Marriages forbidden on account of chastity are, for example, the marriage with one's divorced wife, after she had been married to another man; the marriage of adulterers; the marriage between a divorced woman and a witness in her divorce case; and the marriage of a legitimate child of one family with an illegitimate child of another. Marriages forbidden on religious grounds are, for example, the marriage of Jews with non-Jews; the marriage of the childless widow of a man, who leaves an unmarried brother, with a stranger;

[3] Eben Haezer 1:3.

and the marriage of an Aaronite with a divorced woman. For further particulars as to restrictions placed on the Aaronite in matters of marriage the 21st chapter of Leviticus should be consulted.[4]

A marriage can take place any day of the week excepting on a Sabbath or a holiday. Every Jewish marriage presupposes three conditions—the consent of both parties to the marriage, their mental soundness, and their legal age.

In some communities the professional matchmaker, "Shadchan," plays a prominent part in the arrangement of marriages between young people. When he finds two persons, who in his opinion are fitted as partners for one another, he takes the initiative in bringing them together. The Shadchan is undoubtedly a remnant of the Crusades, during which, owing to the disintegration of society, through massacre and expulsion, Jewish men and women had to be brought together by an agent of the Shadchan's kind.[5]

[4] Lev. 21:6, 7, 14.

[5] "Jewish Life in the Middle Ages," p. 170.

The marriage ceremony consists of two parts —the betrothal, "Erusin," and the nuptials, "Nissuin," which before the sixteenth century were performed separately. The betrothal often precedes the nuptials by from one month to a whole year. The ceremony is performed by a Rabbi, although during the Middle Ages either the groom himself or some guest at the wedding pronounced the customary benedictions. While the omission of the benedictions referred to does not invalidate a marriage, the benedictions glorifying God, are, as a rule, nevertheless recited, since, according to Jewish law, marriage is a divine institution. A Jewish marriage is conducted as follows:

The bride and groom, who are expected to fast on the day of their marriage, as a mark of their penitence for wrongs committed in the early part of their life, proceed to the altar. The bride is led by her father and the groom by his mother. They then take their places under a nuptial canopy, "Chuppah." The Chuppah, which is made either of silk or satin, and is often handsomely embroidered with the words

קול חתן "the voice of the groom," קול כלה "the voice of the bride," קול ששון "the sound of joy," and קול שמחה "the sound of gladness," is supported by four staves, one on each corner, and held by four guests. Instead of an embroidered covering in silk or satin, a large praying scarf, "Talith," may be used.

The person consummating the marriage opens with the words:

"Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you out of the house of the Lord.

Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.

Serve the Lord with Joy. Come before Him, with shouting."

Thereupon Psalm 100 is intoned, followed by these words:

"May He, Who is Mighty, Blessed and Great, above all things bless the bridegroom and the bride."

After this introduction, the officiating clergyman is wont to give a charge, upon the conclusion of which blessings of betrothal are intoned. Lifting up one of the two goblets of wine, the clergyman says:

"Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine.

"Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us by His commandments and commanded us concerning forbidden marriages; Who denied those, that are betrothed, but sanctioned for us such as are wedded to us, by means of the canopy and the sacred covenant of the wedlock. Praised art Thou O Lord, Who sanctifies his people, Israel, by means of the canopy and the sacred covenant of wedlock."

The bride and groom having drunk from the goblets of wine just blessed, the groom proceeds to place a ring upon the forefinger of the bride's right hand, saying:

"Behold, thou are consecrated unto me by means of this ring, according to the laws of Moses and Israel."

Here follows the reading of the marriage contract, "Kethubah," given to the bride. The seven nuptial blessings are then recited by the clergyman, who lifts up a second goblet of wine, saying:

"Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine.

Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who creates all things for His Glory.

Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Creator of man.

Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who made man in his image, according to

His likeness, and prepared for him out of His own being, an everlasting fabric.

Praised art Thou O Lord, Creator of Man. May she who was barren, i. e., Zion, be exceedingly glad and exult when her children are gathered within her in joy.

Praised art Thou O Lord, Who makes Zion glad because of her children.

Cause the loved companions to rejoice, even as Thou didst in days of old gladden Thy creatures in the garden of Eden. Praised art Thou O Lord, Who causes the bridegroom and the bride to rejoice.

Praised art Thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who created joy and gladness, bridegroom and bride, mirth and exultation, pleasure and delight, love and brotherhood, peace and fellowship.

May there be heard soon in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem the voice of joy and gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the jubilant voice of the bridegrooms from their canopies and of youths from their feasts of song.

Praised art Thou O Lord, Who causes the bridegroom to rejoice with the bride."

The young couple then drink from the second goblet. A glass is broken by the bridegroom and the three-fold priestly blessing is intoned as a fitting conclusion of the ceremony.

The details of the ceremony have their symbolical significance. The Chuppah represents the home of the couple which is to be permeated by the religious spirit. The two goblets of wine

represent the cups of joy and sorrow and the bridegroom's and bride's drinking from both is expressive of their willingness to share the joys and sorrow of life. The ring, which no doubt originated in medieval times, is a substitute for the coin, by means of which marriages were originally consummated. It must be made of pure gold and be devoid of gems. Its purity is symbolic of conjugal fidelity; and gems are omitted, as their exact value cannot be esti mated. The breaking of a glass is for good luck. It is supposed to forestall all misfortune due to excessive rejoicing. The custom is no doubt based on a legend, which tells, that, when Rabbina's son was married, Rabbina noticed that the guests were too hilarious. In order to check their glee he broke before them a white porcelain vase worth two hundred zuzim, equal to $100 in our currency.[6]

The Kethubah, or contract, which protected women against penury in the days when women could be divorced against their will, a

[6] Tosephoth Berachoth, 31, a.

condition changed by Rabbenu Gersham, a teacher of the eleventh century, reads:

"On.....(day of the week), the..... day of the month.....in the year..... A. M., according to the Jewish reckoning, here, in the city of.....Mr.....son of .....said to the virgin.....daughter of .....: Be thou my wife in accordance with the laws of Moses and Israel, and I will work for thee, honor, support and maintain thee, in accordance with the custom of Jewish husbands, who work for their wives, honor, support and maintain them. I will furthermore set aside two hundred denarii to be thy dowry according to the law, and, besides, provide thy food, clothing, and necessaries, and live with thee in conjugal relations according to universal custom.

Miss.....on her part consented to become his wife. The marriage portion which she brought from her father's house in silver, gold, valuables. clothes, etc., amounts to ..... Mr.....the bridegroom, consented to increase this amount from his

property with the sum of.....making in all..... He furthermore declared: I take upon myself and my heirs the responsibility for the amount due according to this contract and of the marriage-portion, and of the additional sum (by which I promised to increase it), so that all this shall be paid from the best part of my property, real and personal, such as I now possess or may hereafter acquire. All my property, even the mantle on my shoulders, shall be mortgaged for the security of the claims above stated, until paid now and forever. Thus, Mr....., the bridegroom, has taken upon himself the fullest responsibility for all obligations of this Kethubah, as customary in regard to the daughters of Israel and in accordance with the strict ordinances of our sages of blessed memory; so that this document is not to be regarded as an illusory obligation, or as a mere form of documents.

In order to render the above declarations and assurances of the said bridegroom to the said bride perfectly valid and binding, we have applied the legal formality of symbolical delivery."

ב בשבת
שנת חמשת אלפים ושש מאות וארבעים
לבריאת עולם למנין שאנו מנין כאן
איך ר׳
אמר לה להדא בתולתא

הוי לי לאנתו כדת משה וישראל ואנא אפלח ואוקיר
ואיזון ואפרנס יתיכי כהלכות גוברין יהודאין דפלחין
ומוקרין וזנין ומפרנסין לנשיהון בקושטא ויהבנא ליכי מהר
בתוליכי כסף זוזי מאתן דחזו ליכי מדאורייתא ומזוניכי
וכסותיכי וסיפוקיכי ומיעל לותיכי כאודח כל ארעא
וצביאת מרת בתולתא דא והות
ליה לאנתו ודין נדוניא דהנעלת ליה מבי
בין בכסף בין בזהב בין בתכשיטין במאני דלבושא
בשימושי דירה ובשימושא דערסא מאה זקוקים כסף
צרוף וצבי ר׳ תן דנן
והוסיף לה מן דיליה מאה זקוקים כסף צרוף אחרים
כנגדן סך הכל מאתים זקוקים כסף צרוף וכך אמר
ר׳ תן דנן אחריות
שטר כתובתא דא נדוניא דן ותוספתא דא קבלית עלי
ועל יתתי בתראי לחתפרע מכל שפר ארע נכסין וקנינין
דאית לי תחות כל שמיא דקנאי ודעתיד אנא למקני
נכסין דאית להון אחריות ודלית להון אחריות כלהון יהון
אחראין וערבאין לפרוע מנהון שטר כתובתא דא נדוניא
דן ותוספתא דא ואפילו מן גלימא דעל כתפאי בחיי
ובמותי מן יומא דנן ולעלם ואחריות וחומר שטר כתובתא
דא נדוניא דן ותוספתא דא קבל עליו ר׳
תן דנן כחובר כל שטרי כתובות
ותוספתת דנהגין בבנת ישראל העשויין בתיקון חכמינו
זברונם לברכה דלא כאסמכתא ודלא כטופסי דשטרי
וקנינא מן ר׳
תן דנן למרת
בתולתא דא ככל ניה דכתב
ומפורש לעיל במנא דכשר למקניא ביה הכל שריר וקים

Marriage Contract—*Kethubah*

To this document are usually attached the signatures of the bridegroom and two witnesses and sometimes also the signature of the officiating clergyman.[7]

The ceremony is often preceded by the reading of the regular afternoon service, "Minchah," and is itself never performed among more conservative Jews without the presence of the usual devotional quorum of ten men. It is conducted either at the home of the bride or at the synagogue. After the ceremony a family feast is held, followed by a special prayer of grace. These are the main characteristics of the Jewish marriage. In many communities the marriage ceremony has undergone marked changes and has had new and modern features introduced. Where such is the case, these features may be traced to similar customs in vogue among local non-Jews.

[7] Vide Mielziner, "Jewish Law of Marriage and Divorce" for additional details.

CHAPTER XII

Divorce and Chalitzah

Although the Jew regards marriage a divine institution, and hence one to be maintained throughout the husband's and wife's life, he favors the discontinuance of the marriage state under certain well defined and reasonable conditions. The Jewish divorce laws are based on the following passages:

"When a man hath taken a wife and married her, and it come to pass, that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanliness in her, then let him write her a bill of divorcement and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house she may go and be another man's wife." [1]

According to the Biblical passages just cited, the right of divorce was granted to the husband with no provision of the same right to the wife. In order to prevent the abuse of this privilege

[1] Deut. 24:1-2.

the "Kethubah," marriage contract, was introduced, which stipulated a dowry for the wife, in case of her divorce; while, since the days of Rabbenu Gersham, a teacher of the eleventh century, restrictions in the right of divorce were imposed also on the husband. At the present time no divorce can take place according to Jewish law, except upon common agreement of husband and wife. Nor is the right to sue for divorce any longer confined to the husband. The wife enjoys the same privilege to free herself from an unhappy union. A wife, as well as a husband may sue for divorce on the ground of adultery, immorality or loathsome disease. In addition to these reasons a wife may sue for divorce on account of non-support or desertion. It must, however, be remembered, that while divorce is permitted, Jews, as a rule, seek to avoid a legal separation between husband and wife. The shame attaching to divorce may be recognized in the well-known Rabbinical sentiments, "He who divorces his wife is hated before the Lord"; "God's altar sheds tears for him who divorces the wife of his youth."

באחד בשבת ימים לירח שנת חמשת אלפים ושש מאות וחמשים

לבריאת עולם למנין שאנו מנין כאן בבאלטימארע דמתקריא באלטימאר
מתא דיתבא על נהר פאטאפסקא ועל כיף ימא ועלמי מעינות אנא
העומד היום בבאלטימארע דמתקריא באלטימאר מתא דיתבא על נהר
פאטאפסקא ועל כיף ימא ועלמי מעינות נביתי ברעות נפשי בדלא אניקא
ושבקית ופטרית ותרוכית יתיכי ליכי אנת אנתת
העומדת היום בבאלטימארע דמתקריא באלטימאר מתא דיתבא על נהר פאטאפסקא
ועל כיף ימא ועלמי מעינות דהוית אנתת מן קדמת דנא וכדן פטרית
ושבקית ותרוכית יתיכי ליכי דיתהויין רשאה ושלטאה בנפשיכי למהך להתנסבא לכל
גבר דיתיצבין ואנש לא ימחא בידיכי מן יומא דנן ולעלם והי את מותרת לכל אדם
ודן די יהוי ליכי מנאי ספר תרוכין ואגרת שבוקין וזט פטור
כדת משה וישראל
עדים
עדים

Bill of Divorce—*Get*

The divorce is always conducted in the presence of the religious quorum of ten men, although originally it was conducted in the presence of two witnesses. It consists of the delivery of the bill of divorce, "Get," by the husband to the wife. The bill, written in a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic, reads as follows:

"On the.....day of the week, the..... day.....of the month.....in the year .....of the creation of the world, according to the number we reckon here,.....the city, which is situated on the river.....and contains wells of water, I.....son of ..... who stand this day in.....the city situated on the river.....and containing wells of water, do hereby consent, with my own will, without force, free and unrestrained, to grant a bill of divorce to thee, my wife..... daughter of.....who hast been my wife from time past, and with this I free, release and divorce thee that thou mayest have control and power over thyself from now and hereafter, to be married to any man whom

thou mayest choose and no man shall hinder thee from this day forevermore, and thus thou art free for every man. And this shall be unto thee from me a bill of divorce, a letter of freedom, and a document of dismissal, according to the laws of Moses and Israel."

The document is always signed by two witnesses.[2]

The laws, governing the writing of the bill of divorce, as found in the Shulchan Aruch,[3] are of interest. We shall cite only a few of the more important. The bill of divorce must be written in twelve lines, with durable ink, on parchment, prepared like that of the scrolls of the law. It must not be mutilated. It must be delivered to the wife in person, either by the husband or by an agent appointed for this purpose. It must not be written on Friday. It must be free from mistakes or repetitions. Before it is written the writer must draw thirteen lines across the parchment, twelve for the bill

[2] Mielziner, "Jewish Law of Marriage and Divorce," and Amram "Jewish Divorce Law."

[3] Eben Haezer, 120-153.

itself and a thirteenth line divided into two halves for the signatures of the two witnesses. Every letter must stand by itself; that is, it must not be connected with others. Nor must the letters of one line run into another line, either above or below. The witnesses and writer, husband and wife, must not be in any way related. The bill of divorce must be handed to the wife while it is day and not at night.

An institution, which is in vogue in many communities, and reminds us of divorce proceedings, is "Chalitzah," the act of loosening. By means of it the childless widow of a man is emancipated from the duty of marrying the dead man's eldest single brother. A marriage between a childless widow and her husband's single brother is called "Yibbum," from the Hebrew "Yabam," brother-in-law. Its English equivalent is "Levirate." This peculiar marriage, called "Levirate marriage," together with the form of emancipation from it, is based on the following Biblical law:

"If brethren dwell together and one of them die and

have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger; her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother unto her.

And it shall be that the first born which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother, which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel.

And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders and say: My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother.

Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak unto him, and if he stand to it and say: 'I like not to take her';

Then shall his brother's wife come unto him, in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot and spit in his face, and shall answer and say: 'So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house.'

And his name shall be called in Israel, the house of him that hath his shoe loosed." [4]

The object of the "levirate" marriage was not only, as shown in the Biblical text quoted, to preserve the name of the dead husband but also to keep the tribal portion of the dead husband in his tribe, as the brother became, according to the old Israelitish Agrarian law the heir

[4] Deut. 25:5-10.

of the dead man's property by marrying his wife. The ceremony attending the separation of all ties between the widow and brother-in-law consists of the loosening of the brother-in-law's shoe by the widow, whereupon she spits out before him saying: "So shall it be done unto the man, that will not build up his brother's house." Three judges, for the most part the Rabbi, and chief officers of the congregation, must attend the "Chalitzah." These must be related neither to one another nor to any of the parties seeking the emancipation. During the ceremony the religious quorum of ten men is required. The "Chalitzah" dare not take place before ninety-two days after the death of the husband. The widow is expected to fast on the day of her emancipation. The shoe to be loosened is that on the right foot of the brother-in-law. During the entire ceremony, the judges are expected to sit and the parties to the separation are obliged to stand. When the shoe is loosened the brother-in-law must stand firm upon the right foot and in no way assist the widow while she loosens the shoe with her right

hand. She is not permitted to use the left hand. When the shoe is off, she throws it from her as far as possible. The widow then expectorates before the brother-in-law and all persons present exclaim three times: "The bare-footed." The brother-in-law returns the shoe to the judges, from whom he originally received it, and they say to him: "May God be gracious unto thee, that the daughters in Israel will never have to marry the brother of a dead husband, or receive 'Chalitzah' from him." At the "Chalitzah" a document is handed by the brother-in-law to the widow as a sign of cessation of all mutual obligations.[5]

In order to prevent brothers-in-law from abusing the "Chalitzah" by exacting large indemnity from the widows who often desire to be emancipated, brothers-in-law are obliged to sign a document "Shtar Chalitzah," on the day of a young couple's marriage, stipulating, that they will give "Chalitzah" without the claim of a remuneration.

[5] Shulchan Aruch, Eben Haezer, 169.

In many communities this ceremony has disappeared entirely. The conference of American Rabbis held in Philadelphia in 1869 and the one held at Augsburg in 1871 ruled the Chalitzah as unnecessary for Jews of the present time.[6] Attention is also called to the fact, that the religious ceremony of divorce has, by the Reform Synagogue, been abrogated and the civil divorce is by it regarded sufficient to annul marriage.

[6] Mielziner, "Jewish Law of Marriage and Divorce."

CHAPTER XIII

Mourning Customs

The last ceremonial in the life of a man is the death bed scene and the mourning which follows in his honor. It is these which we will now consider.

When the persons surrounding a patient notice, that there is no hope for recovery and that death is a matter of only a very short time, they prevail upon the patient to make a confession of his guilt. For this purpose the Rabbi is not summoned. Any person may receive the confession, as the confession is not analogous to the last sacrament of the Church. The last words of the dying Jew are always: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one", recited once; "Praised be the name of His glorious Kingdom", recited three times; and "The Lord, He is God", recited seven times. If the patient is too weak to pronounce these words,

those in attendance do so for him. In the case of a woman's death, persons called in to be with the dying, are usually women. When the patient is pronounced dead all present say: ברוך דין אמת "Praised be Thou, O Judge of Truth!"

Among most Jews, when death takes from them some near relative, a garment is rent by each of the bereaved as a sign of grief. This rending is termed "Keriah," tearing. The moment a person dies, a light is kindled, which is kept burning for thirty days and is rekindled at every anniversary of the person's death. Light, as has been said before, is that with which the Bible compares the soul of man. When the light is rekindled on the occasion of an anniversary, it is kept burning for twenty-four hours, from sundown to sundown. The moment that the earth covers the coffin, containing the remains of the departed, the mourning of the family begins. It is then, that its members commence to recite the "Kaddish," mourner's benediction, at every service during their period of mourning. There are several forms of the

"Kaddish," the language of which is Aramaic. The most common form is:

"The great name of God be exalted, and sanctified in the world, which He created, according to His will.

May His Kingdom be established in your life, and in your days, in the life of the whole house of Israel, now and forever. Amen.

His great name be glorified forever and aye.

Render praise and benediction, glory and exultation. Speak of eminence and excellency. Sing songs and hymns to His hallowed name. Give praise to Him Who is exalted high above all benedictions and hymns which are uttered in the world. Amen.

May the Lord of Heaven and earth grant eternal peace and a full participation of the bliss of eternal life, and mercy to Israel, to all the righteous and to all who departed this life in the fear of the Lord. Amen.

May heaven's fullness of peace and life be granted unto us and all Israel. Amen.

May He, Who makes peace in His heavens high, also bestow peace upon us and all Israel. Amen." [1]

For seven days, known as "Shibah," including the Sabbath, on which there is no mourning, and the holidays which modify or set aside the mourning, the mourners, namely the members of the immediate family of the departed, sit either upon the floor or on low stools, as a sign

[1] This English rendering is taken from Isaac M. Wise's Minhag America.

of their abject condition and profound grief. During this period every vocational duty is discontinued. On every morning and evening of the "Shibah," services are conducted in the house of mourning. Friends usually send mourners their food. In some communities the period of this mourning, perhaps appropriately termed "first mourning," is shortened to three days, and, in others to one day, owing to the inability of many people to discontinue business for seven days without incurring great losses. On the Sabbath eve, after the burial of a relative, the mourners, who remain in waiting in the ante-chamber of the synagogue during the early part of the service, are escorted into the synagogue proper by the precentor, just before he welcomes the Sabbath. To do this the precentor leaves the bema, and approaches the door with words of consolation. The "Shibah" is followed by a second mourning. "Shloshim," thirty days, of which the "Shibah" forms a part. For eleven months, from the time of burial, mourners attend every day all services in the synagogue, in order to recite the "Kaddish." During

the first week, the mourner does not go to the synagogue, for services, as previously remarked, are held in the house of mourning. Eleven months were designated, undoubtedly in order to separate the year of mourning from the immediately following year. According to the "Shulchan Aruch" the length of time, during which the "Kaddish" is recited, varies according to the relationship of the surviving kinsman to the departed. Modern usage, however, provides for its recitation for eleven months for every bereavement in one's immediate family.

Another occasion of hallowing the memory of the dead, as well as praising God for one's bereavement, is the Memorial service conducted periodically during the year in the public service of the synagogue.

The customs of burial and mourning are not the same in all countries. It should be noted that the Jewish dead are seldom buried in anything but a plain white linen shroud and in plain board coffin.

This uniformity in the attire of the corpse and in the material of the casket is based on

the desire to conform to the Biblical passage: "Naked I come out of my mother's womb and naked shall I return thither," [2] not to mention the desire to emphasize the equality of all men in death.

[2] Job 1:21.

CHAPTER XIV

Ritualistic Slaughtering

Before closing the treatment of Jewish ceremonial institutions, a word should be said about the ritualistic slaughtering of animals fit for food among Jews. A few statements will suffice to convey a fairly definite idea concerning it. The method of killing animals for food among Jews consists of severing the trachea and œsophagus of the animal by means of a knife, entirely devoid of notches, so that the blood may flow easily out of the body through the slit made. Slaughtering is not directly commanded in the Pentateuch. The verse on which slaughtering is based is:

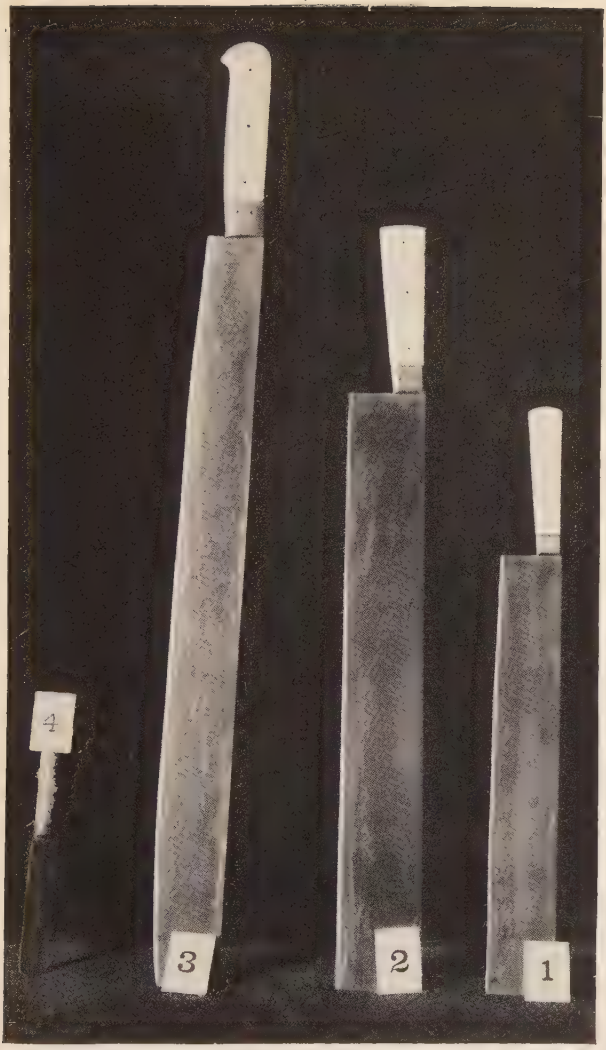
"Only be sure that thou eat not the blood for the blood is the life. And thou mayest not eat the blood with the life." [1]

The knives, "Challafim" used differ in size,

[1] Deut. 12:23.

according to the size of animals to be slaughtered. For fowl there is a small knife, for small cattle a larger one, and for big cattle one of extraordinary size. The act of slaughtering is known as "Shechitah" and the person performing the act is titled "Shochet," slaughterer. The "Shochet" must be a person qualified by knowledge. His examination before competent judges, if passed successfully, is called "Kabbalah." The "Shochet," after a careful examination of its various vital organs, passes upon the fitness of the animal slaughtered for food. If he finds the animal sound he seals the parts with the mark "Kosher" meaning, "fit for food" in contradistinction to "Terefah" meaning "unfit," and originally signifying something torn by a wild animal. In this connection the following passage is of interest. "And ye shall be holy men unto me; neither shall ye eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs." [2] All animals are "Terefah"

[2] Ex. 22:31.



1 Knife for Slaughtering of Fowl
2 Knife for Slaughtering of Small Cattle
3 Knife for Slaughtering of Large Cattle
4 Circumcision Knife

} *Chalafim*

which are found unsound, have died,[3] or are killed by other means than that of slaughtering. It is hardly necessary to state, which animals are permitted for food among Jews. Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 are explicit on this subject. Let this general principle suffice as a statement of the guiding rule observed. Of animals, living on the dry ground, only such are eaten, which chew their cud and divide their hoofs, while of animals, living in the water, only such are eaten which have scales and fins. It should, moreover, be observed, that certain parts, of animals permitted for food, are forbidden. They are blood,[4] fat,[5] and the hind quarter on account of containing the sciatic nerve. The hind quarter is avoided as food on account of the narrative in Genesis, which concluding the story of Jacob's wrestling with the angel of the Lord, tells:

"Therefore the children of Israel, eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the

[3] Deut. 14:21.
[4] Deut. 12:23.
[5] Lev. 7:23.

thigh unto this day, because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank." [6]

Another fact to be mentioned here is, that nothing made of milk in any form, like butter or cheese, is used by Jews together with meat or fat of any kind, the meat of fish alone being exempt. This custom is based on the Rabbinical rendering of the Biblical passage "Thou shalt not seethe the kid in its mother's milk." [7]

The rules of the killing of animals among Jews and those governing the diet of Jews were no doubt prompted to a great exent by hygienic considerations.

These are the main ceremonial institutions of the Jews. There are a great many more of minor importance. To treat them all would be an almost interminable task. The descriptions given in the course of these chapters suffice to give a fair idea of institutions practiced by most Jews in their synagogues and homes, and of many institutions to which Jews are expected to conform in the course of their religious life.

[6] Gen. 32:32.
[7] Ex. 23:19.

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